

RICE UNIVERSITY

**Piano Variations by Liszt, Lutosławski, Brahms, and Rachmaninoff on  
a Theme by Paganini**


by


**Wenli Zhou**

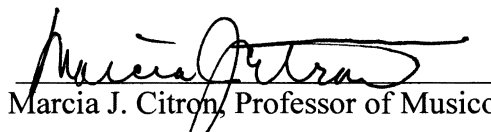
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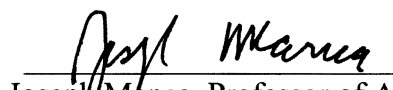
**Doctor of Musical Arts**

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HOUSTON, TEXAS JANUARY 2012

## ABSTRACT

Piano Variations by Liszt, Lutosławski, Brahms, and Rachmaninoff on a Theme by Paganini

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Theme and Variations is arguably one of the oldest musical forms in music history. Composers have used certain themes repeatedly as thematic sources for variations. Among them, Paganini's *Caprice* No. 24 in A minor is certainly the best known, since the theme has inspired many composers for variations of their own. The purpose of this study is to analyze different sets of Variations on Paganini's theme by Franz Liszt, Witold Lutosławski, Johannes Brahms, and Sergei Rachmaninoff, in order to examine, identify, and trace how far an original idea can be stretched by using different variations techniques and their applications. Liszt transcribed Paganini's 24th *Caprice* for the piano, adding a multi-layered sound to the original *Caprice*. His treatment of the Paganini theme is the most literal. Lutosławski's *Paganini Variations* is written for duo piano. This piece builds on Liszt's transcription technique: it stays close to the original Paganini *Caprice*, but at the same time overlays many 20<sup>th</sup> century compositional devices such as atonality and complex rhythmic devices. Lutosławski carries Liszt one step further away from Paganini's original theme. In his *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, op. 35, Brahms keeps the clear structure and strong harmonic progression of the original theme, but carries his invention further away from the source than Liszt and Lutosławski. His compositional technique includes adding new harmonies within the harmonic structure, marking different tempo indications and meter changes,

playing with a variety of rhythm and motives, as well as accentuating the harmonic progression and the bass progression. Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, *Op. 43* is the most personal. He places greater emphasis on the melodic and motivic elements of the theme, and nearly exhausts every option of transformation. Rachmaninoff's extensive development represents the furthest point away from Paganini's source.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Anthony Brandt for his supervision, advice, and guidance from the very earliest stage of this project as well as for giving me extraordinary ideas throughout the thesis. Above all and the most needed, he provided unflinching encouragement and support in various ways. His intelligence and musical intuition has made him as a constant oasis of ideas and passions in music, which exceptionally inspire and enrich my growth as a student, a musician and a scholar want to be.

I am heartily thankful to Dr. Robert Roux, who has been my principle piano professor and mentor while at Rice University. He has worked with me on some of these piano variations, and more importantly, his passion for music and teaching has triggered and nourished my intellectual maturity that I will benefit from for a long time to come. I am indebted to him more than he knows.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Marcia J. Citron and Dr. Joseph Manca, for taking the time to read my thesis and for kindly serving on my thesis committee.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Theme and Variations is arguably one of the oldest musical forms in music history. The origins of Variation form can be traced back to the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Composers have used certain themes repeatedly as thematic sources for variations. Among them, Paganini's *Caprice* No. 24 in A minor is certainly the best known, since it has inspired many composers for variations of their own. The purpose of this study is to analyze different sets of Variations on Paganini's theme by Franz Liszt, Witold Lutosławski, Johannes Brahms, and Sergei Rachmaninoff; in order to examine, identify, and trace how far an original idea can be stretched by using different variations techniques and their applications.

Franz Liszt's *Grandes études de Paganini* are a series of six études for the piano. These pieces are all based on the compositions of Niccolò Paganini for the violin and are among the most technically demanding pieces of the piano literature. The first version was published as *Études d'exécution transcendante d'après Paganini*, S. 140 in 1838, Liszt later revised the work in 1851; it is almost exclusively in this final version that these pieces are played today. The sixth etude, which is based on Paganini's 24<sup>th</sup> *Caprice*, sticks to Paganini's original Theme and Variations form (eleven variations and a coda) as well as the overall tonal plans. Instead of taking the theme and building his own variations upon it, Liszt transcribed Paganini's 24th *Caprice* for the piano, adding a

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<sup>1</sup> The origins of variation form can be traced back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century in Italy and Spain and develops from the practice of repeating several times a strain of dance music, retaining the bass and varying or changing the upper line(s).

multi-layered sound to the original *Caprice*. Thus, his treatment of the Paganini theme is the most literal.

Lutosławski's *Paganini Variations* is written for duo piano. The German occupation of Poland in 1939, soon after the composer's graduation from the Warsaw Conservatory, limited Lutosławski's artistic growth by driving him and his contemporaries underground. With public concerts banned, he and Andrzej Panufnik formed a two-piano team that played surreptitiously in Warsaw's cabarets for the duration of World War II. Between them they composed or arranged some 200 works, of which only Lutosławski's *Theme and Variations on the 24th Capriccio of Paganini* survived, and was published in 1949. This piece builds on Liszt's transcription technique: it stays close to the original Paganini *Caprice*, but at the same time overlays many 20<sup>th</sup> century compositional devices such as atonality and complex rhythmic devices. Using two pianos also gives Lutosławski the opportunity for more intricate textures. Thus, Lutosławski carries Liszt one step further away from Paganini's original theme.

Brahms's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini*, op. 35 is well known for its emotional depth and technical challenges. Brahms named this set of pieces "Studien" and placed himself squarely in the tradition of nineteenth-century piano étude composition. Unlike Liszt, Brahms uses the Paganini theme as the basis of his two sets of variations, each ending with a full-blown finale. Brahms keeps the clear structure and strong harmonic progression of the original theme, but he explores every possibility of the theme. This includes adding new harmonies within the harmonic structure, marking

different tempo indications and meter changes, playing with a variety of rhythm and motives, as well as accentuating the harmonic progression and the bass progression. Thus, Brahms carries his invention further away from the source than Liszt and Lutosławski.

Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43* is written for piano and orchestra. The original Paganini theme is expressed through a much wider range of moods, colors, and textures. The piece has 24 variations, which can be divided into three sections (fast-slow-fast), corresponding to the form of a sonata or concerto. More importantly, he begins the work by applying more traditional Theme and Variation treatment and progressively places greater emphasis on the melodic and motivic elements of the theme, and nearly exhausts every option of transformation. Rachmaninoff is also more harmonically adventurous, introducing startling key changes especially in the later part of the piece. Thus, Rachmaninoff's extensive development represents the furthest point away from Paganini's source that we will study.

All of these works mentioned above are well known to the public audience and performed frequently. This study provides an analysis for each composition in an effort to provide the performer greater interpretive understanding. It is divided into an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter 1 presents the purpose and the scope of the study. Chapter 2 analyzes Paganini's original *Caprice* in detail, in particular examines the specific elements that have made this theme so popular for composers. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 examine each of the four sets of subsequent variations in detail, focusing on specific features of the theme, structure, harmony, rhythm, meter,

and motivic development, with brief background information on the composer and the piece. The conclusion summarizes the findings from this study and attempts to compare the different compositional techniques among the four composers.

Because the works by Liszt and Lutosławski are transcriptions of the original Paganini *Caprice*, they will be presented first. A comparison between these two works and the original Paganini *Caprice* will be given in order to examine how Liszt and Lutosławski transcribe this virtuosic solo violin work for the piano. They are analyzed in the same manner using the following format: theme, harmony and key, treatment of the original material, and transcription techniques. For Brahms, the analysis will be somewhat similar but mainly be focused on the harmony, melodic and rhythmic aspect of the theme. It will try to demonstrate how these elements are transformed, repeated, concealed, and expanded throughout the variations. Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody* is the most complex: it is harmonically vast and motivically sophisticated. The analytical study will be organized in the following parts: first, Rachmaninoff's traditional approach to the original material; second, motivic development in the middle section of the piece; and finally, further harmonic and motivic application of the motivic cells, which are drawn from the original Paganini theme. It will attempt to show how Rachmaninoff organically produces the variations in relation to the theme, designs the large-scale tonal and formal organization, and unifies the theme and variations as a whole in his own musical discourse and narrative.

**CHAPTER II**  
**PAGANINI AND THE *TWENTY-FOURTH CAPRICE***  
***IN A MINOR, OP.1***

**Introduction**

Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840) was considered the most dazzling virtuoso of his time. His personality and image (described as “Hoffmanesque” and “Mephistophelian” in character), as well as his spell-binding virtuosity and showmanship, appealed to audience, in the preface to a biography of Paganini, Renée Saussine writes:

A haze of legend surrounds the great violinist, whom all Europe believed to be possessed of the devil. There was no other explanation possible, they declared, for this infernal skill, the long procession of adoring women, the infatuation of entire nations. Actuated by vanity or credulity, Paganini bore on his lean shoulders the double inheritance of Orpheus and Don Juan. The legend of Faust, which was beginning to spread through Italy, contributed to the Mephistophelean aspect of the virtuoso, without actually defining the details of a possible pact.

Paganini’s performance captivated audiences not only with his unsurpassed technical ability, but also with the expressiveness of his playing. Schubert once wrote, “In Paganini’s *Adagio* I heard the singing of an angel.”<sup>2</sup> Paganini’s music also sometimes brought the listener into ecstasy, to endless dreams of fantasy and thrilling excitement. The poet Heinrich Heine described a performance by Paganini as:

With every stroke of his bow, Paganini conjured up before my eyes visible shapes and scenes. He told me, in pictures, many strange tales, in which he and

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<sup>2</sup> Renée de Saussine, *Paganini* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1954), 120

his violin played the principal part.<sup>3</sup>

There are many great virtuosos in the history of the violin; however few have ever attained Paganini's skill, speed, precision, and freedom of expression. His major contributions to the art of violin playing are: use of harmonics, development of staccato, and his more extensive usage of double, triple, and quadruple stops. He imaginatively used natural and artificial harmonics in his concertos and fantasias, incorporating both ascending and descending chromatic slides, simple and double trills, and entire passages of double stops in harmonics. Paganini was the first to use the flying staccato and the staccato ricochet. He introduced the technique of having the left hand play *pizzicato* on one string and the right hand play *arco* passages on another string, either simultaneously or in quick alternations—thus combining the melody with a left-hand pizzicato accompaniment.

Paganini was not considered to be the greatest composer of the nineteenth century, but his enormous contributions to music have been recognized not only as a virtuoso and an innovator of violin technique, but also as one of the pioneers of Romanticism. He pursued free expression and emotional creation rather than traditional technical expertise of the eighteenth century. He was, in Schumann's words, "the turning-point in the history of virtuosity."<sup>4</sup> "The particular lesson he taught his contemporaries was to master the resources of instruments down to the last technical detail and to utilize a total technique for expressive purposes."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, 138

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Abraham Veinus, *The Concerto* (New York: Dover Publication, 1964), 169

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*.



The *Twenty-Four Caprices* for solo violin was written during Paganini's stay at the Napoleonic court of Lucca in 1801 to 1809. Pietro Locatelli, a famous violinist at the time and his *Arte di nuova modulazione* (in French as *Caprices énigmatiques*)<sup>6</sup> influenced Paganini greatly. He followed Locatelli's new kind of modulation, which suggested many different harmonic manipulations through a pivot chord. In the works of the old masters the harmonic progression was predictably systematic, while the unexpected was a rare occurrence. This new method evoked a new world of ideas and techniques for Paganini, enabling him to create a new sound with his violin techniques.

As Saussine writes:

He pondered on this new kind of modulation, which was suggestive and emotional. The tones were as varied as the expressions on a human countenance, and on this pivot turned the whole of the new technique. It was not a mere tour de force, but an intrinsically musical achievement, vital and stimulating.<sup>7</sup>

The *Caprices* were not published until 1820. At the time they were considered unplayable until Paganini performed them himself. However, as with many of his works, it is believed that he never performed them in public, instead restricting them to the private audiences he favored.<sup>8</sup> These pieces were the only important works that were published in his lifetime; they were also considered by many Romantic composers to be his finest achievement.<sup>9</sup> The *Twenty-Four Caprices* were known for Paganini's serious pursuit of violin playing and technical ability, which are both exemplified in the

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<sup>6</sup> Grove Dictionary defines "Caprice" as a French word for the Italian "Capriccio" meaning whim or caprice. In the mid-eighteenth century the term was applied to exercises for stringed instruments, which would now be called "Études."

<sup>7</sup> Saussine, *Paganini*, 24

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, 209

<sup>9</sup> G.I.C. deCourcy, *Paganini, the Genoese* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 73

extraordinary technical demands and musical sophistication. As DeCourcy states in *Paganini, the Genoese*, Paganini wrote to Lichtenthal in 1796 that he had “composed difficult music of his own invention.”<sup>10</sup>

The last *Caprice* of Op.1 is among his best known of compositions. It is notable for the number of variations it has inspired. Apart from Paganini himself, it has served as the basis for many other works, some of them are (table 2.1):

**Table 2.1.** Selected works based on Paganini’s theme in A minor

Composer	Title of Work
Baker, David	<i>Ethnic Variations on a Theme by Paganini</i> (1976)
Blacher, Boris	<i>Variation on a Theme by Paganini for Orchestra</i> (1947)
Brahms, Johannes	<i>Variations on the Theme by Paganini, Op. 35, Book I &amp; II</i> (1862-63)
Busoni, Ferruccio	<i>Variation- Studien nach Paganini- Liszt</i> (Klavierübung edition) (1920)
Friedman, Milton	<i>Studien über ein Thema von Paganini, Op. 47b</i> (1914)
Kartun, Leon	<i>Caprice rythmique pour le piano</i> (1948)
Labunski, Wiktor	<i>Four Variations on a Theme by Paganini</i> (1943)
Liszt, Franz	<i>Grande Étude de Paganini, No. 6</i> (1838/51)
Lloyd, Webber Andrew	<i>Variations for Cello and Rock Band</i> (1977)
Lutoslawski, Witold	<i>Variations on a Theme of Paganini, for Two Pianos</i> (1940-41)

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

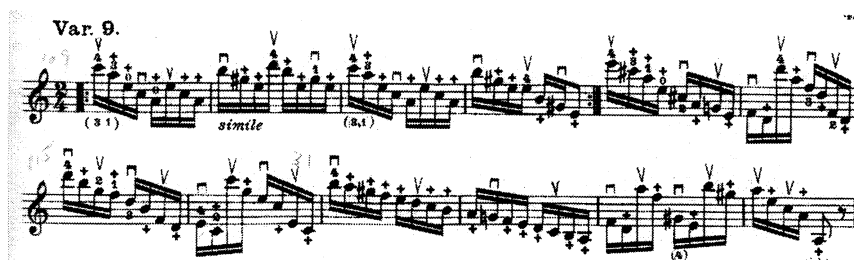
Muczynski, Robert	<i>Desperate Measures Op.48 (Paganini Variations)</i> (1995)
Piatigorsky, Gregor	<i>Variations on a Theme by Paganini</i> (1986)
Rachmaninoff, Sergei	<i>Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini for Piano and Orchestra, op.43, (1934)</i>
Rochberg, Robert	<i>Fifty Caprice-Variations after Paganini</i> (1970)
Schumann, Robert	<i>Etudes After Paganini Caprices, Op. 3</i> (1832)
Szymanowski, Karol	<i>Three Paganini Caprices, for Violin and Piano, Op. 40</i> (1918)

The 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice consists of a theme and eleven variations, the last of which also includes a finale. While leaving the harmonic structure established in the theme fairly simple, each of the eleven variations explores a new technique of the right or left hand, and Paganini's own virtuosity is evident in the level of difficulty maintained throughout the piece.<sup>11</sup> Each of the eleven variations of Paganini's 24<sup>th</sup> caprice explores a different aspect of violin technique, making it a perfect example of technical variations. These devices include spicatto arpeggios (Variation 1), octaves (Variations 3 and 5), left hand pizzicato (Variation 9), cantabile playing, thirds/tenths (Variation 6), broken octaves (finale), double stops with wide shifts, and assorted arpeggio playing (finale). The most extended of techniques is in Variation 9. It combines *pizzicato*, the plucking of the strings, with *arco*, which uses the bow. But the plucking is done with the left hand (as opposed to the bow hand, which is most common) in quick alternation with *arco*, requiring coordination of all of the player's physical forces.

**Example 2.1.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> caprice – Var. 9

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<sup>11</sup> Further discussion on the variations will be made later in the chapter.




### Theme

The theme of the 24<sup>th</sup> caprice has prompted much attention from its inception because of its strong, clear, conclusive harmonic basis and its distinctive repetition of sixteenth-note figures. The 16-bar theme is in binary form, with a four-measure A section that is repeated, followed by an eight measure B section. The B section moves through the circle of fifths at first with a new chord every measure; the harmonic rhythm accelerates in mm. 9-10 as the theme approaches its closing cadence. All eleven variations follow this form exactly except for the B section of Variation II, which is one bar short.

### Example 2.2. Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice—Theme



What may have motivated composers to write their own variations based on this particular theme was the appeal of the tight motivic organization of the theme.

First, the rhythmic cell: , appears in every bar except for the cadence of the A and B sections.

**Example 2.3.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice- Theme, m. 1-2



Second, the theme is constructed around the interval of fifth: each pair of two measures moves a distance of a fifth (mm.1-2 are A to E, mm.5-6 are A to D). This interval is inherent in the instrument, since the violin is tuned in fifths, which makes the leap an easy motion.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the theme unfolds over a very elemental harmonic progression: first I-V, then a circle of fifth progression.

Finally, the contour of the first measure is preserved in every bar except the cadence. Thus, the theme has a very strong motivic identity (See example 2.3).

In his article “A Theme of Paganini,” Wadham Sutton states:

The strong attraction of this theme lies in large measure in its essential flexibility, for it is not a theme at all, but rather is as much a skeletal framework which is suggestive of a harmonic scheme. Its structure is of an artless simplicity: a few bars of tonic and dominant harmony, a sequence through the subdominant to the relative major and a direct return to the tonic by way of a strategically placed augment 6th chord. The melodies which can be made to fit so conventional a progression are legion, and Paganini’s initial impulse is sufficiently neutral to accommodate an infinite number of perfectly legitimate modifications. So pliable is this theme, so flexible its structure, that practically any treatment can be made to be relevant. Indeed it is an abiding danger to the charlatan, who will merely use it as a prop for his faltering imagination. Yet to the true artist, striving always to

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<sup>12</sup> Claire Marie Blaustein, “Paganini and Baker: Variations upon Variations,” *McMaster Music Analysis Colloquium*, vol. 4 (2005), 26.

impart cogency and to develop it in a meaningful way, it presents a considerable challenge.<sup>13</sup>

Other than the characteristics mentioned above, binary form, diatonic melody, and slow harmonic progression have all played an important role as well in attracting composers to produce works based on this theme. A binary form is usually well-suited to variation treatment, because in the repeated section or the second half a change or an alteration can easily be made. A diatonic melody also allows more room for ornamental gesture, either chromatically or diatonically than a chromatic melody. A slow harmonic rhythm makes it possible for a composer to be free within the basic scheme of the harmony, as a simple progression of I to V allows any variety of chords to be inserted between them.

### **Harmonic Treatment**

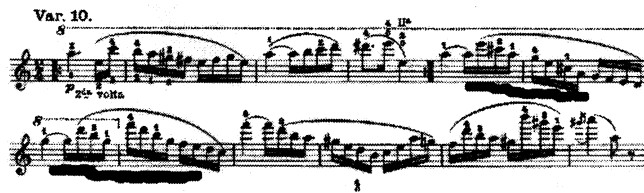
Harmonically, Paganini stays very close to his original progression throughout the set of variations. There are no variations in the parallel or relative major keys. The few modifications that take place fall into the following five categories.

1. At the close of each variation, Paganini substitutes a  $ii^{\circ}$  or  $ii\bar{7}$  chord for the theme's implied Italian  $6^{\text{th}}$  chord. However, since these chords all serve the same function it is a rather minor change. Paganini keeps the Italian  $6^{\text{th}}$  only in Variation 8.
2. The second type of harmonic change involves delaying a chord change by having the previous chord carried over for a beat. This happens several times in Variation 10.

**Example 2.4.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> caprice, Var. 10

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<sup>13</sup> Wadham Sutton, "A Theme of Paganini," *The Musical Opinion* 94 (1971): 287-88.



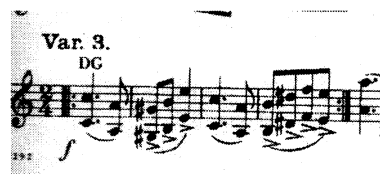
3. The third is the use of passing chords, this is done mainly in Variation 11.

**Example 2.5.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> caprice, Var. 11



4. The final type of change is a complete change of harmony. This happens only twice. The first is in the A part of variation 3 and bar 40 when V/V to V is used in place of a simple V chord.

**Example 2.6.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 3, bars 37-40



The other change occurs in the B section of Variation 5 from bars 69-70. A Neapolitan is used in place of a ii° chord. The i chord which follows is delayed by an implied V or vii° to make a normal progression.

**Example 2.7** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 5, bars 67-72



## Structure

The variations stay in the key of A minor throughout. They neither increase nor decrease in difficulty or intensity, nor do they consistently build to the end. Because of the nature of technical variations, it is difficult to determine which of the variations is more or less difficult or intense, because each performer will approach the variations differently, depending on one's strengths as a player. However, this is not to say that Paganini did not have a plan for the performer or the listener. There are a few obvious points of respite, particularly the variations that move up into the high registers (Variation 4 and 10) but thin out the texture, acting as a sonic break from the otherwise busy composition. Overall, the variations are placed next to each other in a way each of them capitalizes on their variety and creates a sense of contrast from one to the next, which seeks not only to demonstrate the player's abilities, but also to maintain the audience's interest. The effect of the whole is a compendium of technical devices within a well conceived form.



## CHAPTER III

### FRANZ LISZT AND *PAGANINI ETUDE NO. 6* IN A MINOR,

#### *THEME AND VARIATIONS*

#### Introduction

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) has been remembered not only as one of the most significant composers of the nineteenth century but the greatest bravura virtuoso ever lived. Clara Schumann writes:

We have heard Liszt. He can be compared to no other virtuoso. He is the only one of his kind. He arouses fright and astonishment. His attitude at the piano cannot be described—he is original—he grows sombre at the piano.<sup>14</sup>

Charles Hallé, well-known pianist and conductor, also wrote in a letter:

He (Liszt) was a giant, and Rubinstein spoke the truth when, at the time when his own triumphs were greatest, he said that in comparison with Liszt all other pianists were children...For him there were no difficulties of execution, the most incredible seeming child's play under his fingers. One of the transcendent merits of his playing was the crystal-like clearness which never failed for a moment even in the most complicated and, to anybody else, impossible passages; it was as if he had photographed them in their minutest detail upon the ear of his listener. The power he drew from his instrument was such as I have never heard since, but never harsh, never suggesting "thumping."<sup>15</sup>

During the 1830s and 40s, leading composers such as Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt made an unprecedented breakthrough in piano technique, introducing a range of new technical and expressive possibilities. This change is accompanied by the advances of

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<sup>14</sup> Cited in Alan Walker, "Liszt's Musical Background." In *Franz Liszt: The Man and His Music*, 36-78, edited by Alan Walker (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1970), 46-7

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Joseph Banowetz, "Liszt: A Perspective," *Piano Quarterly* 89 (1975), 7-11

the instrument itself: its greater strength, bigger sound and wider dynamic range, allowed a richer variety of pianistic textures, such as tremolos, bell-like harmonics, glissandos, leaps, and spiccato effects, etc. Modern piano technique owes much to Liszt's pioneering developments during these years.<sup>16</sup> He was the first to "orchestrate" on the piano that no one before, not even Chopin, had imagined. His use of the grandiose orchestral effects probably stems from the influence of Berlioz, from whom Liszt learned orchestration.

Liszt first heard Paganini in April 1831 on the stage of the Paris Opéra. The twenty-two-year-old young Liszt was so entranced by Paganini's technical and musical abilities, that he wrote to his student Pierre Wolff in Geneva, "For two weeks my mind and my hands have been like those of a man possessed."<sup>17</sup> Paganini also immediately declared his intention of "achieving upon the piano an equivalent new technical mastery in order to unleash musical thoughts, which had remained hitherto inexpressible."<sup>18</sup>

The works most representative of Liszt's virtuoso years are the six "Paganini Studies" and the twelve "Transcendental Studies." The *Grandes études de Paganini* is a collection of six études for the piano. Liszt himself revised them in 1851 from an earlier version, which was published under the title *Étude d'exécution transcendante d'après Paganini*, S. 140 in 1838 and was dedicated to Clara Schumann. Five of the six études are based on Paganini's *Twenty-four Caprices*, op. 1. The earlier version remains among the most daunting challenges in the piano literature, and it was only playable by a small

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<sup>16</sup> Chopin is also known as a pioneer in the pianistic revolution.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald Taylor, *Franz Liszt* (London: Grafton Books, 1987), 25

<sup>18</sup> Alan Walker, "Liszt's Musical Background," 45.

number of pianists who had extraordinary technical abilities. Between the years of 1849 and 1853, Liszt decided to revise most of the pieces he had composed during his earlier years. These works included the *Années de pèlerinage*, the early *Hungarian Rhapsodies*, the *Transcendental Etudes*, and the *Paganini Etudes*.<sup>19</sup> The revisions made these works more accessible and accommodated the changing requirements of the modern piano, with its heavier action. Alan Walker comments:

Their greater simplicity stands in inverse proportion to their increased brilliance, and that had never happened before. They are a perfect illustration of the law of economy to which all physical motion strives: "Minimum effort, maximum result." Only the greatest master could conserve more energy than he expends while at the same time achieving a more powerful result. Paradoxically, virtuosity is used here to transcend virtuosity itself.<sup>20</sup>

The 1851 revision of the set is most commonly performed today. They were designed to allow the pieces to "speak" more effectively.<sup>21</sup> Liszt smoothed out some of the more difficult passages and thinned out the textures, giving the pieces a leaner, more brilliant sound. Nevertheless, even with fewer notes, these works still call for tremendous technical exertion by the pianist. It is reported that Liszt deliberately suppressed further publications of the first version of these etudes. Prior to 1852, he forestalled the selling of the 1838 version by purchasing the engraved plates from Tobias Haslinger, and later gave the copyright to Breitkopf and Härtel for the publication of the revised version. In a letter to Alfred Dörffel, Liszt writes:

I recognize only the Härtel edition of the twelve studies as the sole legitimate one, and I therefore wish that the Catalogue make no mention of the earlier ones...it is

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<sup>19</sup> Alan Walker, "Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years, 1848-1861," (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1989), 147

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 149

<sup>21</sup> Alan Walker, et al. "Liszt, Franz." In Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/48265pg9> (accessed January 9, 2010).

the same with the Paganini Etudes and the Rhapsodies hongroises; after settling matters with Haslinger I completely gained the legal right to disavow the earlier editions of these works, and to protest against the possible piracy of them.<sup>22</sup>

A comparison of the two versions will be made later in this chapter.

### ***Grande Étude de Paganini No. 6***

The sixth Etude is the largest in scale of the set and remains a fine piece of virtuosity. Instead of taking the theme and building his own variations upon it, Liszt transcribed Paganini's twenty-fourth *Caprice* faithfully. Like Paganini, each variation displays a specific technical feature, including thirds, tenths, octaves, arpeggios in triads, wide leaps between the extreme registers, rapid staccato long successive trills against a cantabile melody, passages against chords in three-against-four rhythm, to name a few. The slight departure from the original is mainly concerned with alterations of harmony, extensions of numbers of measures, written-out repeats, and additional melodic material.

#### **Theme**

Liszt presented the theme almost exactly as the violin version except for a slight rhythmic change. He used thirty-second notes, a shorter note-value, instead of sixteenth notes for the upbeats.

#### **Example 3.1.** Comparison between Paganini and Liszt Themes



<sup>22</sup> Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years, 1848-1861*, 147



Also, Liszt repeats the entire second section. The original structure of Paganini's  $||:4:||8||$  is changed to  $||:4:||16||$ . Repeating the B section gives Liszt the opportunity to vary the harmony and texture in the written-out repeat.

**Example 3.2** Liszt, Harmonic Analysis of the Theme, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed.

In Liszt's presentation of the theme, the original  $ii^{\circ}6$  chord in A minor in measure 13, is replaced by a Neapolitan sixth chord by lowering the B to a B-flat, thus changing the melody as well.

**Example 3.3A.** Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, Theme, m. 13



**Example 3.3B.** Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, Theme, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., m.21



Liszt also added an A to the interval of an augmented sixth, F and D#, forming a complete Italian-sixth chord in measures 15 and 23.

**Example 3.4A.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> *Caprice*, Theme, mm.11-12



**Example 3.4B.** Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, Theme, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., mm.15-16



The accompaniment is simply arpeggiated broken chords. However, Liszt varied the left hand in the repeat of the second part by taking out one note of the chord on the downbeat and adding another chord on the second beat (see Example 3.2).

## Form

Formally Liszt's Etude follows Paganini's original, with a few exceptions. Liszt's piece is considerably longer than Paganini's (the 1838 version has 218 bars, 1851 has

220, where the Paganini original is 158 bars). In addition to repeating the B section in the theme, he also does so in Variation 2. The repetition occurs in both versions but the revised version is extended by three measures after the cadence. Liszt writes out the repeats of the A sections in Variation 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, and 11. Besides Variation 2, where both the A and B section are doubled, Variation 3 and 8 vary the A section. Variation 6 also doubles the A sections, but it is written out as a left hand *ossia* for the repeat.

Other small changes which account for greater length include a first and second ending in the A section of Variation 1, which has one more bar. There is also a one-bar extension in the last variation, a result of a sequence, which Liszt uses to lead into the coda. The coda follows the Paganini original exactly in form. Taking written repeats into consideration, only the theme and Variations 2 and 11 are different in terms of form.

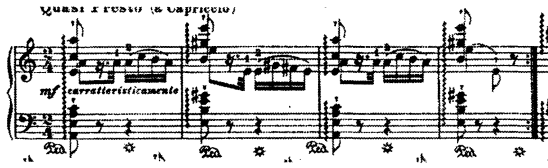
### **Melody/Texture**

A more important aspect is the addition and alteration of melodic materials. Liszt adds material either above or below the original lines, and many of these additions create a new textural layer. In Var.1 Liszt places the theme in the left hand under the original triplet arpeggios, creating a new texture that involves three-against-four rhythm. Liszt's 1838 version scores Paganini's original line in triads against the theme, but in the revised version it is reduced to its original single notes. The grace notes that precede each of the downward arpeggios follow the original in the first version, but are widened in the revised version (Example 3.5)

**Example 3.5a.** Paganini 24<sup>th</sup> *Caprice*, Var. 1, mm. 13-16



**Example 3.5b.** Liszt *Paganini Etude*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., Var. 1, mm.1-4



**Example 3.5c.** Liszt *Paganini Etude*, revised Ed., Var.1, mm.1-4

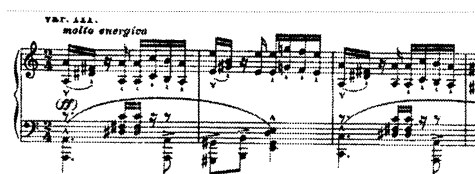


In variation 3, Liszt places Paganini's original melody in the bass and combines it with a variant of the main theme in the right hand. All the melodic elements are in octaves in the A section, and in a combination of tenths and octaves in the B section. (Example 3.6)

**Example 3.6a.** Paganini 24<sup>th</sup> *Caprice*, Var. 3, mm.37-40



**Example 3.6b.** Liszt *Paganini Etude*, Var. 3 (1838/1851), mm.65-69





The idea of combining a variant of the main theme and the original violin line thus creating a multi-layered variation continues in Var. 4, this time with a main theme variant in the bottom and the original line on top. The theme appears in triplet chords, creating a three-against-four rhythm against the chromatic octave passage. In the 1851 version the left hand is reduced to an outline of the theme (Example 3.7)

**Example 3.7a.** Paganini, *24<sup>th</sup> Caprice*, Var. 4



**Example 3.7b.** Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, Var. 4(1838/1851), mm. 81-85

Paganini's original line is doubled in octaves and has two other minor alterations in the last four measures of this variation. The first change is the syncopations in bars 93 and 94. The second is the descending chromatic line in the final bar, where Paganini's original has a falling arpeggiation in the tonic (Example 3.8).

**Example 3.8.** A comparison of Liszt *Paganini Etude* (1838/1851), Var. 4, mm. 85-89, and *Paganini Caprice*, Var. 4, mm. 57-60



The fifth Variation departs from the original through the change to a fuller texture.

Paganini's broken octave is filled with broken chords divided between the two hands.

The original two-note figure, which alternates with the octave figure is now elaborated into a triplet (Example 3.9).

**Example 3.9.** A comparison of Liszt *Paganini Etude*, Var. 5, mm. 97-100, (1838/1851), *Paganini Caprice*, Var. 5, mm.61-65

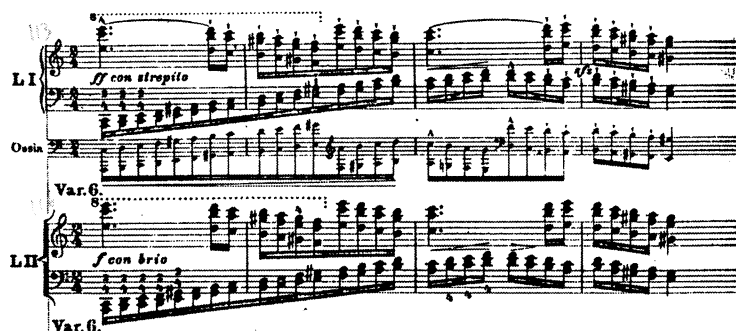


Liszt continues playing with the texture in Variation 6. In the A section, the falling thirds are rescored by doubling the top note an octave lower filled in with a third, and set in contrary motion with a bass line. In the 1838 version the added bass line is all thirds with the repeat scored as tenths. A small change is made in the revised version by changing the added bass line from thirds into octaves (Example 3.10).

**Example 3.10a.** *Paganini Caprice*, Var. 6, mm. 73-74



**Example 3.10b.** Liszt *Paganini Etude* Var. 6, mm. 113-118(1838/1851)

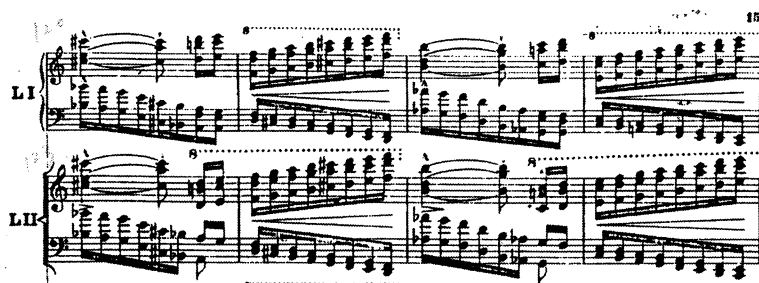



In the B section, the original tenths in the violin are alternated between octaves and thirds by the left hand (Example 3.11).

**Example 3.11a** *Paganini Caprice*, Var. 6, mm. 77-78



**Example 3.11b** Liszt *Paganini Etude*, Var. 6, mm. 120-121



The seventh variation is another example of a complete textural change. Liszt follows Paganini's original melody but doubles it two octaves below in the left hand. Each line of the two-voiced texture is set to imitate orchestral instruments. The high voice is marked *quasi flauto* and the lower voice *quasi fagotto*. The earlier version uses the rhythmic figure  as accompanying chords, adding rhythmic interest to the triplet figures. But Liszt took it a way in the revised version and replaced by a chord (Example 3.12).

**Example 3.12** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 7, mm. 85-87 and Liszt *Paganini Etude* (1838/1851), Var. 7, mm. 128-130



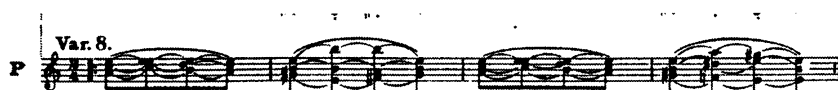
A complete rhythmic change appears at the end of the B section. The triplet figure in the original is replaced by a thirty-second-note triplet followed by a sixteenth rest. Furthermore, the final phrase is completely rewritten as well (Example 3.13).

**Example 3.13.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 7, mm. 95-97 and Liszt *Paganini Etude* (1838-1851), Var. 7, mm.137-139

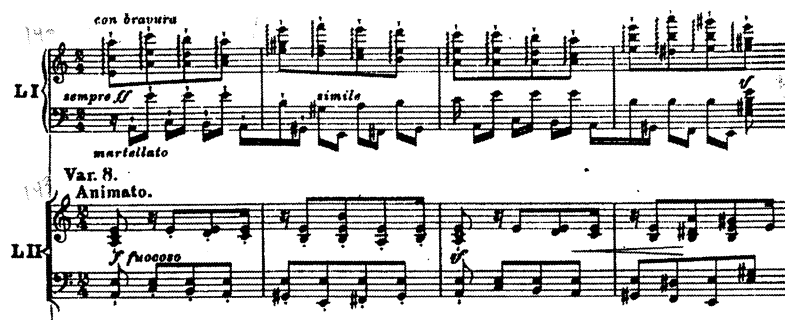


Both versions of Variation 8 depart from the original effect of triple stops. Liszt uses widespread three note chords in the right hand with skips in the left that outlines the original theme. The revised version eliminates much of this superfluous display, reducing it to alternating chords divided between the two hands. The 1838 version is once again a multi-layered variation, whereas the 1851 version simply rearranges the notes of the chords for alternating hands (Example 3.14).

**Example 3.14a.** Paganini 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 8, mm. 97-100



**Example 3.14b.** Liszt *Paganini Etude*, Var. 8, mm. 140-144 (1838/1851)



The last 4 measures of the B section employ a different technique by jumping to a chord inward from an octave in both hands. The revised version continues the alternating chord procedure but in contrary motion.

**Example 3.15a.** Paganini 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 8, mm. 105-108



**Example 3.15b.** Liszt *Paganini Etude*, Var. 8, mm. 152-155 (1838/1851)

Variation 9 is a combination of left-hand pizzicato and spiccato for the violin, which has no counterpart on the piano. Liszt recasts Paganini's pizzicato effect by adding staccatos over the notes and changing registers at every note, creating wide leaps. In the left hand Liszt adds a new thematic variant of the original theme, which is completely different in texture. Extremes of wide leaps are characteristic of the 1838 version, extending to three octaves at the end of the variation. However, the revised version simplifies much of this by staying true to the original line with only an added broken chord accompaniment to fill in the harmony (Example 3.16).

**Example 3.16.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 9, mm. 109-113 and Liszt *Paganini Etude* (1838/1851), Var. 9, *Paganini Caprice*, Var. 9, mm. 156-159

Var. 9.  
L.I. *p fantasicamente*  
L.II. *giacato (quasi pizzicato)*  
*p*  
*(quasi senso Pedale)*  
P. *V. arco*  
*p. pizzicato*

In the tenth variation the original melodic line is retained in the right hand, but Liszt creates multi layers of sound by adding a long tonic pedal trill through much of the variation. Most violinists will agree that this is one of the least challenging variations of the piece, but Liszt's transcription requires pianists to have the independence of fingers that can control different voices simultaneously (Example 3.17).

**Example 3.17** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 10, mm. 121-123 and Liszt *Paganini Etude* Var. 10, mm. 172-174 (1838/1851)

Var. 10.  
*marcato ed espressivo*  
L.I.  
L.II. *Var. 10. Più moderato.*  
*8*  
P. *Var. 10.*  
*continua simile. (egualmente)*

The final variation is the longest of the set. Paganini's original uses double stops with wide shifts alternating with arpeggios that outline the harmony. Liszt combines these two elements, putting the sweeping arpeggios in one hand and the chordal leaps for the

other simultaneously. The A section is rounded off by an ascending chromatic scale in octaves (Example 3.18).

**Example 3.18a.** Paganini 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 11, mm. 133-136



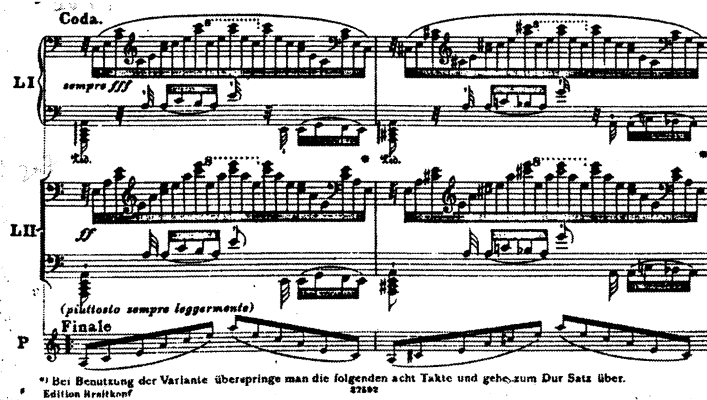
**Example 3.18b.** Liszt *Paganini Etude*, Var. 11, mm. 188-191(1838/1851)



In the coda Paganini's arpeggios are transcribed into large sweeping arpeggios spanning four octaves. Liszt also adds fragments of the original theme in the left hand. This is a marvelous example of Liszt's recreation (Example 3.19).

**Example 3.19.** A comparison of Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Coda and Liszt, *Paganini Etude* (1838/1851) Coda, mm. 204





Liszt follows Paganini's key change to the parallel major and also doubles the arpeggios and extends the range. Much of the bravura of Liszt, such as wide chordal leaps alternating with short figurations, sweeping arpeggios, chromatic running passages, and octaves passages, is seen in this last variation and coda. Huneker writes,

What a superb contribution to piano literature is Liszt's...have they not all tremendously developed the technical resources of the instrument, and to play them on must have fingers of steel, a brain on fire, a heart bubbling with chivalric force.<sup>23</sup>

### Harmony

Liszt occasionally varies the harmony. The harmonic changes of Liszt's Paganini etude can be categorized into the following three areas.

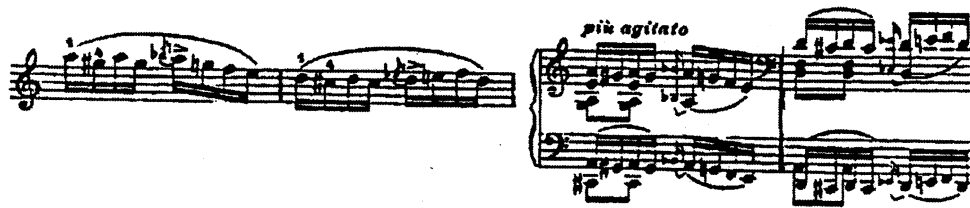
1. The addition of sevenths and ninths to the dominant function chords. This happens most frequently on secondary dominant chords in the B section of each variation. The following examples are typical.

#### Example 3.20a

Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, mm.29-30

Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., mm. 42-43

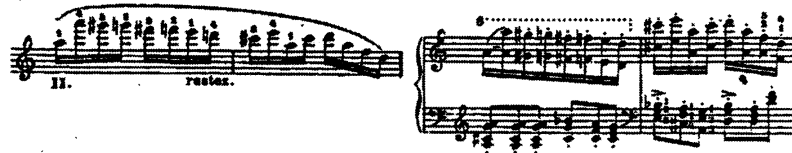
<sup>23</sup> Cited in Herbert Westerby, *Liszt and His Piano Works* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), 117



### Example 3.20b

Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, mm. 53-54

Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., mm.78-79

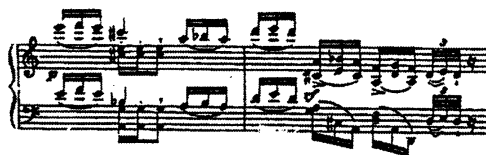


### Example 3.20c

Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, mm.89-90



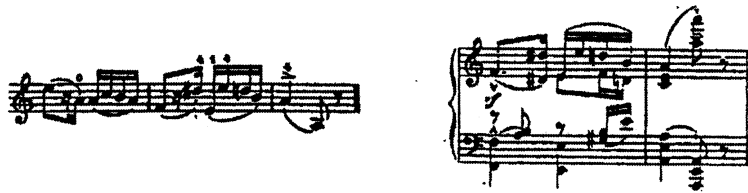
Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., mm. 118-9



2. Harmonic changes at the cadences. As mentioned earlier, Paganini generally replaced the implied Italian 6<sup>th</sup> chord in the cadence of the theme with the ii<sup>o</sup> chord in most of his variations. Liszt replaced the Italian 6<sup>th</sup> chord of the theme's cadence with a French 6<sup>th</sup> chord. In Variations 2, 3, 4, 6, and 11, Liszt uses either a French or Italian 6<sup>th</sup> chord. In Variation 8 Liszt uses a vii<sup>o</sup>7/V instead of Paganini's Italian 6<sup>th</sup>. In Variation 2 Liszt also uses a plagal cadence following the addition of the French 6<sup>th</sup> chord.

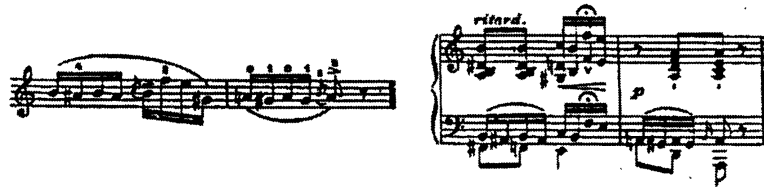
**Example 3.21a**

Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Theme, Cadence vs. Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., Theme, Cadence



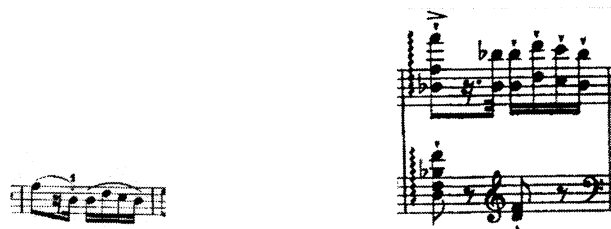
**Example 3.21b**

Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 2, Cadence vs. Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., Var. 2, Cadence



3. The final category includes changes of harmony within each variation. The following examples will show the different techniques Liszt used in his work. Each of the changes gives a new harmonic color and is worth mentioning. In bar 21 of the Theme, Liszt replaces a  $ii^{\circ}$  chord with a Neapolitan 6 (Example 3.22.).

**Example 3.22.** Paganini, 24 *Caprice*, Theme, m. 13, Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., m.21



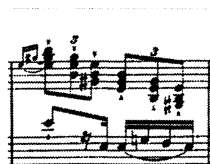
Variation 1 retains the original harmonization in the right hand, but the theme, in the left hand, is altered in the second measure so that it no longer implies E major, rather E Phrygian, as does the theme in variation 3, 4, and the coda (Example 3.23).

**Example 3.23** Liszt *Paganini Etude*, Var. 1, 3, 4, and the coda

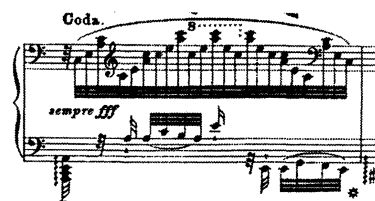
Var. 1

Var. 3

Var.4



Coda



In Variation 2, Liszt substitutes an implied iv-i progression for a I chord (Example 3.24a).

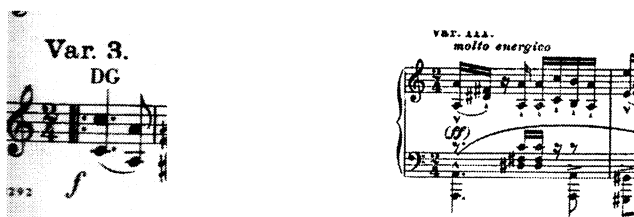
**Example 3.24a.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, Var. 2, **b**, Liszt, *Paganini Etude*, Var. 2 cadence



In Var. 3, a vii°/V replaces a I chord (Example 3.24b).

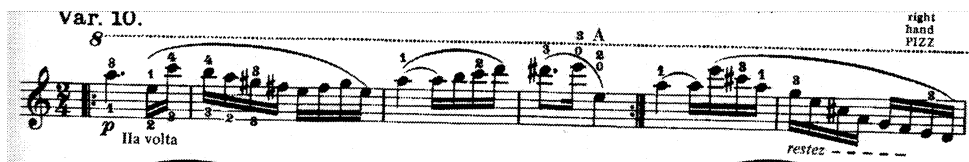
**Example 3.24b**, Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice ,Var. 3 m.37, **b.** Liszt *Paganini Etude* Var. 3, m.

1



Liszt also uses a tonic pedal in the beginning of Var. 10 (Example 3.25).

**Example 3.25a.** Paganini, 24<sup>th</sup> Caprice, m. 131-137



**Example 3.25b.** Liszt Etude Var. 10, m.1-6



Liszt merely made a transcription of Paganini's piece for the piano. He kept the same key, meter, general form, and number of variations, and even retained the character of each variation. As a counterpart to the original Paganini Variations, Liszt took Paganini's ideas for solo Violin and made it more idiomatic for the piano. In other words, although Liszt's variation technique naturally follows that of Paganini's, he took it further by adding a touch of genius. As discussed earlier, Liszt combines Paganini's original material with a melodic or rhythmic variant of the original theme, thus creating multi-layered variations. Despite the technical demands, the overall impression of this etude is not of the music for the sake of exercise, but of beautiful, poetic virtuosity.

## CHAPTER IV

### WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI AND WARIACJE NA TEMAT PAGANINIEGO (1941) (*VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY PAGANINI FOR TWO PIANOS*)

#### Introduction

Similar to Liszt's version of the Paganini Theme, Lutosławski's *Variations on a Theme by Paganini* is another set of highly original and imaginative transcription of Paganini's 24<sup>th</sup> caprice, written for two pianos. While giving the work a traditional underpinning, he incorporated 20<sup>th</sup> century compositional devices such as chromatic and dissonant harmonies, ostinati, polytonality, and polyrhythm.

Witold Lutosławski was one of the major European composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Warsaw on January 25, 1913 to a musical family, he began taking piano lessons at the age of six; later recalled that he was "driven by an inner desire which has been with me since I was aware of the world around."<sup>24</sup> At the age of nine, Lutosławski also started private theory and composition lessons with Witold Maliszewski and composed his first piano composition "*Taniec Chimery/ Dance of the Chimera*" in 1930. The piece was performed two years later at a public concert at the Warsaw Conservatory. In 1932 Lutosławski continued to study composition with Maliszewski and piano with Jerzy Lefeld at the Warsaw Conservatory. Along with an extensive education in music, Lutosławski later studied mathematics at the University of Warsaw during the years of 1931-1933, but eventually chose to devote all his time to music.

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<sup>24</sup> Steven Stucky, *Lutosławski and His Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 3.

Lutosławski's first encounter with modern music was when he heard Szymanowski's Third Symphony, op.27 "*Pieśń o nocy/ Song of the Night*." Its sensuous harmonic language, large orchestration with soloist, organ, and chorus, and the influence of middle-eastern culture fascinated the young Lutosławski. He recalls, "Afterwards I ran home and spent days trying to recapture those sounds at the piano. For weeks I could think of nothing but this work."<sup>25</sup>

Even though inclined to romanticism, Szymanowski stayed open to the antiromantic practices in Europe and encouraged young Lutosławski to look for new aesthetic ideas.<sup>26</sup> Lutosławski was already fascinated by the music of Ravel, Debussy, and early Stravinsky during his student years at the conservatory. Under the influence of Szymanowski, he first attempted to develop harmonic and coloristic impulses in his *Symphonic Variations* of 1938, his first important composition. Lutosławski recalls the first time he showed the composition to Maliszewski, his composition teacher at the Conservatory:

I showed him (Maliszewski) my symphonic variations which I had started to compose a year before the end of my studies, but written completely independently without his help. He declared openly that he did not understand it. I prepared the harmonic analysis of the piece—and he said: "Now we talk a common language, now I understand it. But that does not mean I like it. For me your work is simply ugly."<sup>27</sup>

Germany invaded western Poland and Russia invaded eastern Poland in September 1939. Under Nazi occupation, it was extremely difficult for musicians, teachers, and authors. Lutosławski writes:

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, 10.



When the Nazis entered Warsaw, Polish music stopped. After the Jews and gypsies, we Slavs were hated most by them. They took over the orchestras, kept most of the Polish musicians, but German conductors and repertory were imported. Poles boycotted their concerts but we arranged clandestine meetings in rooms, daring imprisonment to play chamber music or premiere some of our things.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately *Symphonic Variations* was Lutosławski's last important work for almost ten years. During the war years, Lutosławski made a living by joining a cabaret group playing popular dances and by playing duo-piano with his friend and a conservatory colleague Andrzej Panufnik in the Warsaw cafés, which were the only public venues for Polish musicians. Their repertoire consisted of a wide range of music in their own arrangements, such as Bach's organ toccatas, works of Mozart, Brahms, Szymanowski, Debussy, Ravel, and much more. *Variations on a Theme by Paganini* was composed during this time and became the only work that outlasted the two-hundred-some pieces the two musicians put together.<sup>29</sup> The more difficult first piano part was for Lutosławski himself, and the second piano part for Panufnik.

### Form

Following Paganini's mold, Lutosławski's set comprises a theme with twelve variations and a coda. Each variation has two sections of eight measures each<sup>30</sup> except for Variation 10 and the coda, and they follow the original motives of each variation very closely. Variation 10 contains thirty-two measures, which is twice as long as the

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<sup>28</sup> Cited in Stucky, *Lutosławski and His Music*, 16.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> Some variations have four measures of exact repeat, some are slightly altered and the repeats are written out.

others. The coda is eight measures long. Lutosławski added a twelfth variation as a result of dispensing with Paganini's finale and substituting a restatement of the main theme.

### Use of the Original Paganini Motives

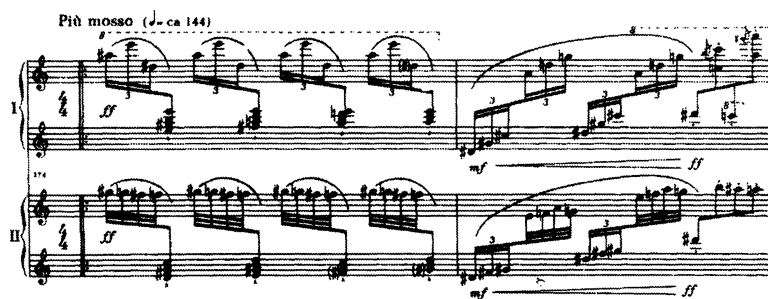
The melodic material of each variation is shared between the two pianos.

The original Paganini motives are preserved in all the variations except for No. 11 and the coda. The original material of the remaining variations are divided as follows:

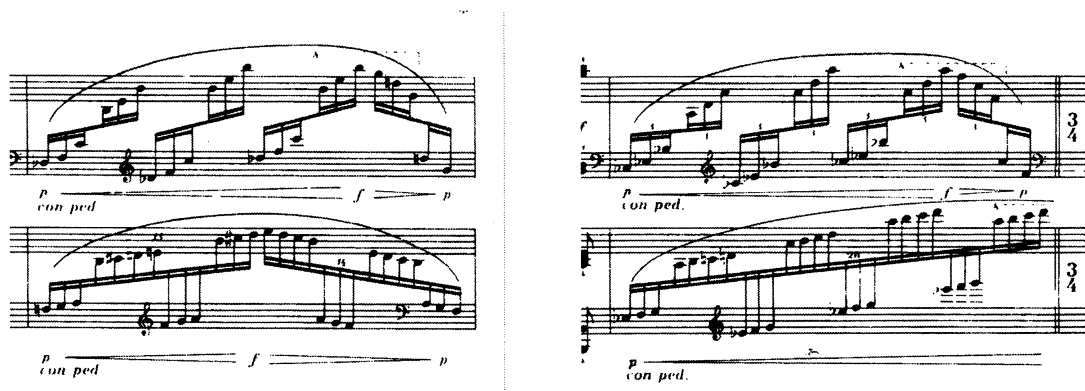
Variations 1, 2, 7, and 8 are in Piano I; and Variations 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 12 are in Piano II; Variations 5 is shared by both pianos.

In Var. 11 and the coda, both pianos contribute in producing the overall effects of Paganini's original writing, but none of the actual material is used. The only figuration vaguely suggesting Paganini's original are the upward sweeping arpeggiation in mm.10 and 12 (Example 4.1b).

#### Example 4.1a, Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 11, mm.1-2



#### Example 4.1b Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 11, mm. 10 and 12



### Harmony

The most dramatic changes occur in harmony. Lutosławski superimposes bi-tonal and polytonal chords on top of Paganini's diatonic progression. While Paganini's motivic invention shines through, it is now through the clouds of twentieth century sonorities. Minor seconds and tritones are dominant as a result of setting tonalities or single notes against each other.<sup>31</sup> The characteristic minor second and tritone intervals are immediately recognized in the theme. Piano I plays the main melodic motif while piano II accompanies with unexpected harmonies (example 4.2).

**Example 4.2** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Theme, mm. 1-11

<sup>31</sup> Anna Bolland, "Piano Variations by Ives, Valen, Lutosławski, Dallapiccola: A Discussion of Their Styles and Forms." (D.M.A. Thesis, Indiana University 1981): 43.



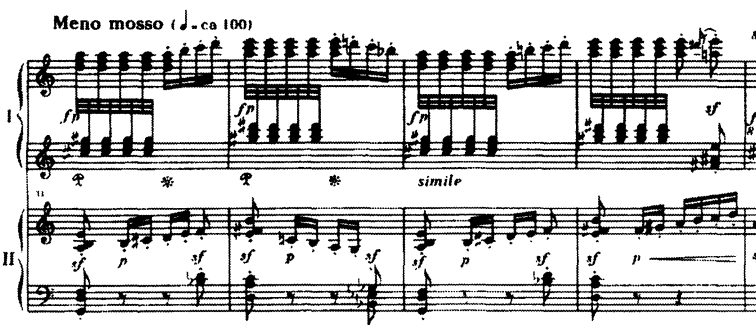
In the B section of the theme, polytonal chords are set either a tritone apart in mm. 9, 11, 13, and 14, or a minor second apart in mm.10 and 12 (example 4.3 and 4.4)

**Example 4.3.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Theme, mm.12-18



The minor second interval stays very prominent in Var. 2, as the original material is elaborated by changing the original sixteenth-note figure to thirty-second note figure of chromatic neighboring tones in Piano I. Piano II is to provide dissonance in the variation by the use of dissonant chords, such as thirteenth chords and triads (example 4.4).

**Example 4.4.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 2, mm.1-4



The original Paganini melodic material is reserved in piano II of Var. 3 but the harmony is highly chromatic and dissonant, with many of the chords a minor second apart between the two pianos. Most of the measures contain at least four or five different chords. For example, measure 1 has Ab major, A major, D major, and F minor; measure 9 has F major, Bb minor, C# major, Ab major, and D major (example 4.5).

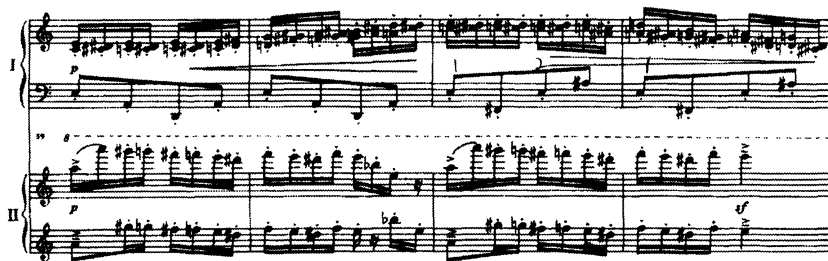
**Example 4.5.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 3, mm.1-9



Here Lutosławski also adds the new syncopated rhythms to conceal the original line.

In Var. 4, the original melodic element continues to be taken by piano II. The only slight modification Lutosławski makes is the replacement of an E major chord by a tritone interval at the end of phrases (example 4.6). Piano I consists of a collection of seconds, thirds, and fourths up and down the keyboard, thus creating a cluster effect.

**Example 4.6.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 4, mm.1-4



Dissonant harmony in Var. 5 is heard in the bass notes of piano II. Here instead of E and B in the bass, Lutosławski uses F and C to create a minor and augmented second against the right hand chords (example.4.7).

**Example 4.7.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var.5, mm.1-6



In Var. 6 contrary-motion scale and triad passages suggesting different tonal centers are seen throughout the variation. There are tonal indications of A minor, E minor, Db major, and C major, resulting in dissonances arising from this juxtaposition (example 4.8).

**Example 4.8.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var.6, mm.1-5



Piano II of Var. 7 is entirely based on the interval of a minor second. Lutosławski introduces a chromatic ostinato figure in the two-bar introduction and manages to compliment the original Paganini melodic material in piano I for the rest of the variation (example 4.9).

**Example 4.9.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var.7, mm.1-6

The chromatic ostinato figure continues to serve in the next variation in Piano II, this time played in a hemiola rhythm, which the melodic material occurs in the first piano. The melodic line is harmonized with a variety of major, minor, and diminished chords (example 4.10).

**Example 4.10.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var.8, mm.1-8

The image shows a musical score for Variation 9 of Paganini by Lutosławski, measures 118-122. The score is written for two pianos, I and II. Piano I (top) starts with a *p dolce* marking and plays a series of chords. Piano II (bottom) starts with a *p ben legato* marking and plays a driving sixteenth-note passage. Both pianos have *con ped.* markings. The score includes dynamic markings such as *crescendo*, *poco*, and *a*.

In Variation 9 the first piano plays a driving sixteenth-note passage of alternating fourths and fifths and they are mostly alternating white and black keys. The two hands are always playing different intervals and are technically challenging. The original Paganini melodic material is played by Piano II but is very fragmented. The result is an extremely dissonant variation with the fragmented melody somewhat lost in the midst (example 4.11)

**Example 4.11.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variation*, Var. 9, mm. 1-4

The image shows a musical score for Variation 9 of Paganini by Lutosławski, measures 1-4. The score is written for two pianos, I and II. Piano I (top) starts with a *sf p* marking and plays a series of chords. Piano II (bottom) starts with a *sf p* marking and plays a series of chords. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *f*, and *sf*.



The driving ostinato figure continues into Variation 10 but now the left hand is a lot more consistent rhythmically and intervallically. The Paganini melodic line is taken by the second piano, with octave doublings, but is slightly modified in the B section. Chords set a tritone apart between the two pianos can be heard in the last eight measures, with tonal movement suspended around the F ninth chord (example 4.12).

**Example 4.12.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 10. mm. 29-32

Characteristic of Variation 11 is a series of tritones and triplets spanning a ninth in the first piano against chromatic 32<sup>nd</sup> note figures, then coinciding on a polychord, which is a second apart (example 4.13).

**Example 4.13.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 11, m.1

This creates a great deal of dissonance, and it is the accumulation of these dissonances that creates this variation's characteristic sonority.

In Var. 12, while the theme remains in A minor, the alternating-hand triplet chordal figures in the accompaniment is a mixture of major, minor, and seventh chords placed a minor second or tritone apart (example 4.13).

**Example 4.13.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 12, mm.1-2



The tritone interval is again reinforced in longer notes in the last two measures before entering the coda (example 4.14).

**Example 4.14.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 12, mm. 15-16



The eight-measure coda contains sweeping arpeggios spanning five octaves, over chromatic scales in the second piano. Other virtuosic devices such as chord tremolos, wide leaps, pedal points, are all used in the short eight-measure coda (example 4.15).

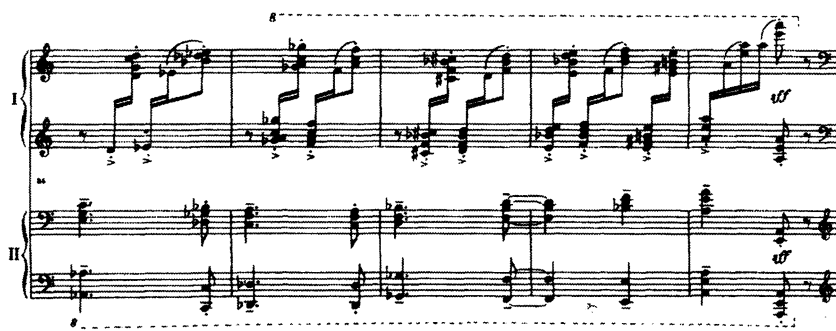
**Example 4.15.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Coda

The image shows the first four measures of the Coda from Lutosławski's *Paganini Variations*. The tempo is marked 'Ancora più mosso'. The score is for two staves. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a 'con ped.' (con pedal) instruction. It features a melodic line with triplets and a crescendo marked 'crescendo molto'. The second staff also begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and 'con ped.', with a similar melodic line and a 'crescendo molto' marking.

The image shows measures 5 through 8 of the Coda. Measures 5 and 6 continue the melodic development on the first staff, with a crescendo leading into measure 7. Measures 7 and 8 show a change in texture, with the first staff playing chords and the second staff playing a more active melodic line. The dynamics are marked *ff* (fortissimo) in measures 7 and 8.

Although poly harmonies frequently exist between the two keyboards, traditional dominant-tonic cadences are present. For example, in Var. 5, the melody wanders through a succession of dissonant chords in the last five measures before resolving to the tonic, A minor (example 4.16)

**Example 4.16.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 5, mm. 12-16



In the last four measure of Variation 11, the E-A#-E in the second piano suggests a cadential figure of dominant-tonic major-dominant, then finally resolves to an A minor chord on the downbeat of the next Variation (example 4.17).

**Example 4.17.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 11, mm. 13-16, Variation 12, mm.1-2



### Tempo Markings

Another significant feature of Lutosławski's variations is his choice of tempi. Compared to Paganini's original, which is marked as "Quasi Presto" in the beginning, Lutosławski employs a succession of different tempi as well as metronome markings: Theme—*Allegro capriccioso* (quarter note = ca. 144)

Var. 2—*Meno mosso* (quarter note = ca. 100)

Var. 6—*Poco lento* (eighth note = ca. 80)

Var. 7—*Allegro molto* (quarter note = ca.100)

Var.11—*piu mosso* (quarter note = ca.144)

Var.12—*Ancora piu mosso* (half note = ca. 88)

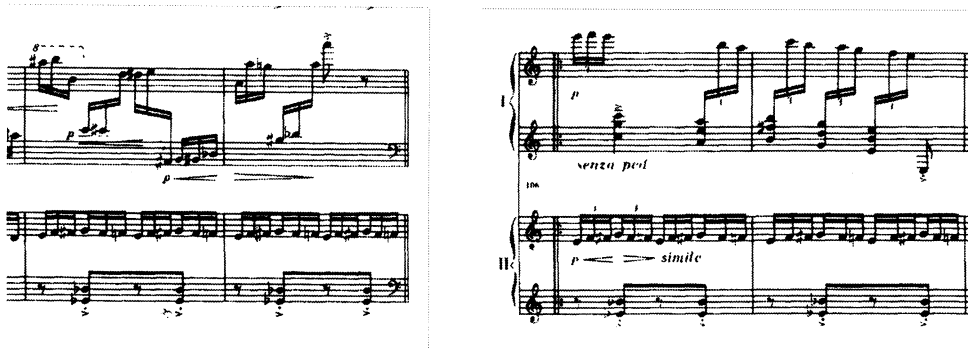
Even at the tempi change, Lutosławski manages to maintain the continuity of the piece by linking one variation or section to the next. For instance, in the Theme between m.8 and 9, Lutosławski uses a passing tone in Piano II instead of a clear ending in the original (example 4.18).

**Example 4.18.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Theme, mm.6-11

The musical score for Example 4.18 shows two staves, Piano I (treble clef) and Piano II (bass clef). The music is in 2/4 time. Piano I has a treble clef and Piano II has a bass clef. The score includes dynamic markings: 'sub. sf molto', 'p', 'f', 'molto sf', and 'p'. The music features complex rhythmic patterns and a chromatic ostinato triplet figure in Piano II.

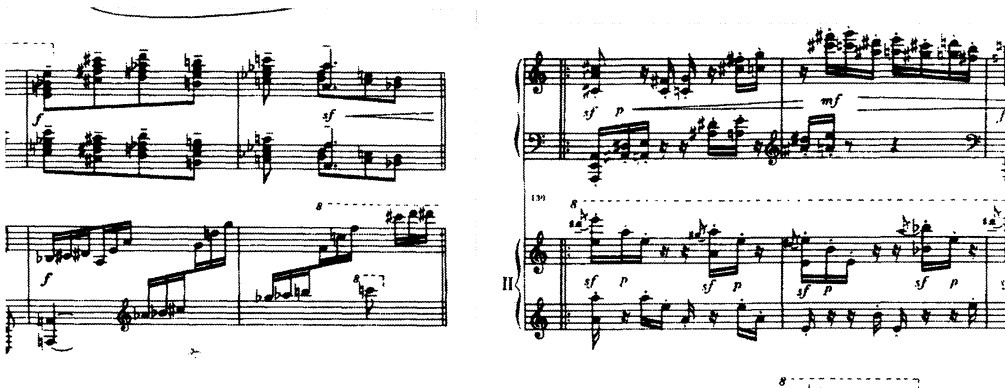
Another example can be found in the chromatic ostinato triplet figure of Var. 7 continues its role in Var.8 (example 4.19).

**Example 4.19.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 7, mm.16-17/Var.8, mm.1-2



The chromatic notes in the last measure of Var. 8 continue into the succeeding variation as well (Example 4.20).

**Example 4.20.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variations*, Var.8, mm 11-12/Var.9, mm.1-2



In addition, in Var. 8, Lutosławski indicates a *crescendo* culminating the variation, which serves as a link to Variation 9.

### Dynamics

Contrary to Paganini's original dynamic indication *f*, and Liszt's *f con brio*, Lutosławski resorts to a totally opposite *dolcissimo e molto legato* effect in Var. 6 (see example 4.8). Like Var. 6, Var. 7 also contrasts completely in style with Paganini's original. Compared to the more laid back original Variation, the running 16<sup>th</sup> note triplets against a drone in Piano II bring a more energetic pulse (see example 4.9).

The dynamic indication is unusual in Var. 8 as well. The variation begins *p dolce*, with one continuous crescendo culminating in the next variation. This enhances the continuity of the variations and serves as a link to the following variation (example 4.21)

**Example 4.21.** Lutosławski, *Paganini Variation*, Var. 8

In his *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, Lutosławski preserves the essence of the original *Paganini variations* but he reinterprets it by employing twentieth-century compositional idioms. The combination of the diatonic Paganini progression and a variety of dissonance, including tritones, diminished and minor intervals, and clusters, have made the work more distinctive, a step further than Liszt's transcription.

## CHAPTER V

### BRAHMS AND VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY PAGNINI IN A MINOR

#### OP. 35, BOOK 1 & 2

##### Introduction

Both Liszt and Lutosławski preserve not only Paganini's theme but also the variations. Liszt adapts them for piano while Lutosławski superimposes contemporary harmonies on top of them. Brahms is the first example we will study where the variations are entirely original. For most pianists, Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, op.35 are probably the most virtuosic among all his keyboard works. Clara Schumann called them "witch variations" (hexen-Variationen) and regretted they were beyond her capacity. Piano techniques of the nineteenth century such as consecutive thirds, sixths, and octaves, passages with both hands in cross rhythm, octave-glissandi, rapid scales, legato playing involving the shifting of fingers, prolonged trills, wide skips, stretches, and rhythmic complexities—nearly every technical possibility is brought into play to exhibit the pianist's virtuosity. Brahms gave the sets another title: "Stüdien für Pianoforte" (Études for Pianoforte), suggesting the difficult technical nature of the set. Nevertheless, these studies are not only developments of pianistic technique, but also of compositional technique. Compositional devices, such as imitation, double counterpoint, canonic writing, new harmonies between the original chords, the retention of the same pulsation in a new note value, cross-rhythms, and continuous syncopated notes, are all well presented.



As one of the most prominent composers of the Romantic period, Johannes Brahms (1833-97) deeply regretted being born “too late”<sup>32</sup>: not in the eighteenth century, but in the nineteenth century at the consummation of Romanticism. He was a classicist born in the Romantic Period. His music has the romantic richness, fullness of sonority, new orchestral color and emotional warmth of Romanticism, yet his musical language is frequently classical. Brahms favored the old traditional forms. The variation form is well represented: *Variations on a Theme by Schumann*, Op. 9; *Variations on an Original Song in D* and *Variations on a Hungarian Song in D*, op. 21; *Variations on a Theme by Handel in B-flat*, Op. 24; *Variations on a Theme by Paganini in A minor*, Op. 35; *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, Op. 56; the Fourth Movement of the *Fourth Symphony*, Op. 98; the Finale of the *Clarinet Quintet*, op. 115; the Third Movement of the *Second Clarinet Sonata*, Op. 120; and the slow movement of the *Piano Trio*, op. 87.

Brahms’s classical approach to the variation form lies in his adherence to the barring and structure of the theme. His themes are generally short and simple with clear melodic and rhythmic patterns in two-part or three-part form. The ornamental variation of Mozart and Haydn was not the model for Brahms. Rather, his variations were based on the given structure, harmony, and bass of the theme.<sup>33</sup> In a letter to Joachim, he wrote, “In a theme for variations the bass is almost the only element that has any meaning for me.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1947): 150

<sup>33</sup> *Variations on a Theme by Schumann*, Op. 9 is an exception.

<sup>34</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary*, S.V. “Variations.”

The *Paganini Variations* consist of two self-contained books, each containing the theme and fourteen variations. Paganini's theme is extended from sixteen to twenty-four bars by repeating the entire B section. All of the variations in both books, except for Variations 6 in Book 2 and the two finales, are twenty-four measures in length. Different tempo indications and meter changes are commonly found throughout the two sets (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Books I and II, Overall Plan of Meter

	Th.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Book I	2/4	2/4	2/4	6/8	12/8	2/4, 6/8	6/8	6/8	6/8	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4
BookII	2/4	2/4	2/4	2/4	3/8	3/8	3/8	2/4, 3/8	6/8	2/4	6/8	2/4	6/8	2/4	6/8,2/4,6/8, 2/4, 6/8

In the first set, only simple duple and compound duple meters are used, except in Variation 4, which employs compound quadruple meter. Changes of meter are more frequent in the second set. The meter changes from duple, to triple, to cross-rhythm in the center of the set (Variation 7), with pairing of compound and simple duple meter in the rest of the second set.

Book 1 is entirely in A minor except for Variations 11 and 12, which are in the parallel major. Book 2 is also in A minor except for Variations 4 and 12, which are in A major and F major. However, each of the two sets approaches its large harmonic and rhythmic plan differently. The first set starts with a strict harmonic plan and gradually

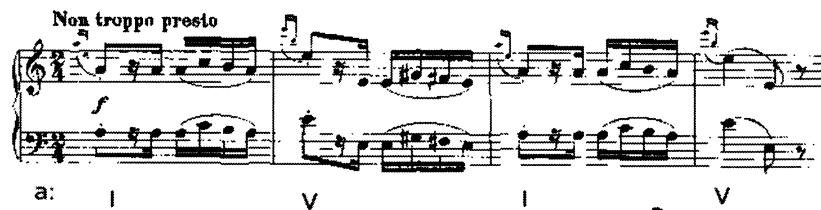
becomes freer while the second set begins with more harmonic freedom and gradually “clarifies” the strict harmonic plan.<sup>35</sup>

The characters of the two sets are also different. The first is more technically challenging, more restless and formidable; the second is more pianistic, more sensitive, and musically more difficult.

### Theme

Brahms uses an identical version of the theme for both sets. In addition, he repeats the B section and added grace notes to the melody and it doubles the melody one octave lower in the left hand. Dynamically the theme is marked *forte*, differing from Paganini and Liszt’s *piano* presentation (Example 3.1).

#### Example 5.1 Brahms, *Paganini Variation*, Theme, mm.1-4

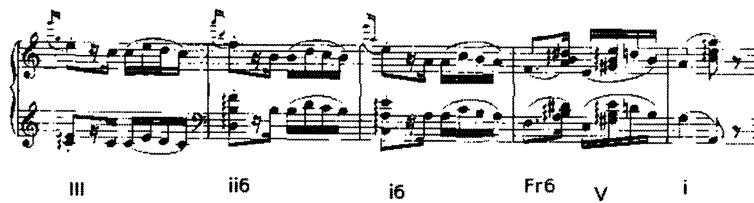


Harmonically, Brahms follows the Paganini and Liszt’s version very closely. The basic harmonic analysis of the second section is as follows:

#### Example 5.2 Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Harmonization of Section B of the Theme



<sup>35</sup> More on harmony will be discussed later in this chapter.



### Form

The phrase structure of the theme, 4+4+8+8, appears in almost all of the variations. Only Variation 6 from Book II is slightly varied—it omits the repetition of the first phrase ||A||: B :||. Other exceptions include the final variations of each set, which are extended by extra variations, transitions, and codas.

### Key

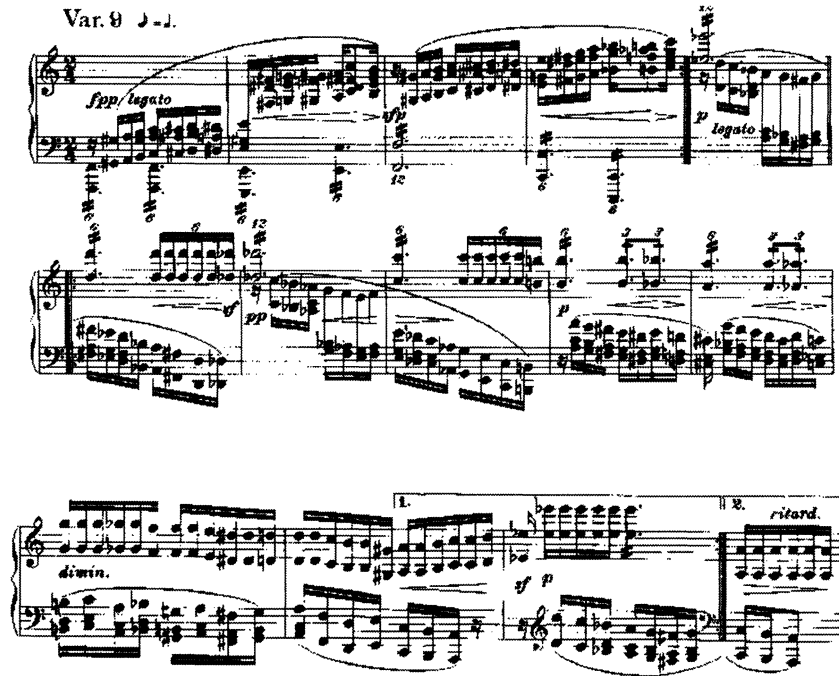
The key of A minor, is retained in most variations of both books. The parallel major key of A major is also used in Variations 11 and 12 in Book I, and in Variation 4 of Book II. In addition, F major, the submediant Key, which creates a third-relationship is seen in Variation 12 of Book II.

### Harmony

Brahms kept the basic harmonic progression of the theme and the basic contour of the harmony (||: i – V :||: V/iv – i :||) in most of the variations. Variation 9 from Book I and Variations 1 and 2 from Book II are the strongest exceptions. Brahms adds more chromaticism. For instance, the harmonies of Variation 9 from Book I are extremely free. Instead of tonic, Brahms starts this Variation on F, a VI chord, and ends on C, an III chord instead of V. In the second section, the left hand chords travel through an entirely new and remote set of keys, beginning with G minor, F minor, E minor, then D minor.

The right hand descends chromatically from Eb to A. Nevertheless, the harmonic rhythm is very clear in this variation—two bars, two bars, one bar, one bar, and two bars of cadence, as in the theme (example 5.3).

**Example 5.3.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book I, Var. 9



The first Variation of Book II is harmonically somewhat adventurous. Even though the first two bars offer clear tonic and dominant harmonies of A minor, they are immediately followed by the tonic and dominant of C-sharp minor in measure 3 and 4, jumping to a major third above (example 5.4).

**Example 5.4.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book II, Var. 1, mm. 1-5



In the second section, from measures 18 to 24, Brahms emphasizes the characteristic progression of the circle of fifths seen in the theme (example 5.5):

**Example 5.5.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book II, Var. 1, mm. 17-24



Progression of the circle of fifth as follows:

A – d – A – G – c – f – c – F – G – c – G – F – b flat – e flat – b flat – E flat – a flat – d flat – a  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 flat – C sharp – f sharp – B – E – A – d – E – A  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Cadence

Instead of the expected tonic-dominant progression, Variation 2 of Book II uses third-relationship chords,  $i - III - VI - iv - (Fr.+6)$  in the first section (Example 5.6). In the second section, diminished seventh chords are inserted between the main harmonies (Example 5.6).

Harmonic plan for Section 2 of Var. 2 of book II:

$A - (c^{\#}7) - d - (b^{\circ}7) - C - (a^{\circ}7) - d - (g^{\#}7) - a - ii^{\circ}7 - V7 - i$



**Example 5.6.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book II, Var. 2

Var. 2  
Poco animato

The following are different ways Brahms inserted between main harmonies:

By using Chromatic descending or ascending lines.

**Example 5.7a.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book 1, Var. 3, mm. 1-2

Var. 3

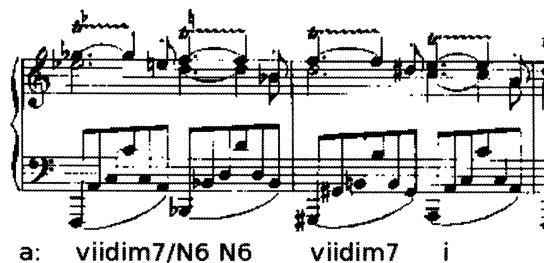
a: i-----> V

**Example 5.7b.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book 1, Var. 5, mm.1-4



By inserting diminished seventh chords functioning as secondary dominant.

**Example 5.8a.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book 1, Var. 4, mm. 13-16

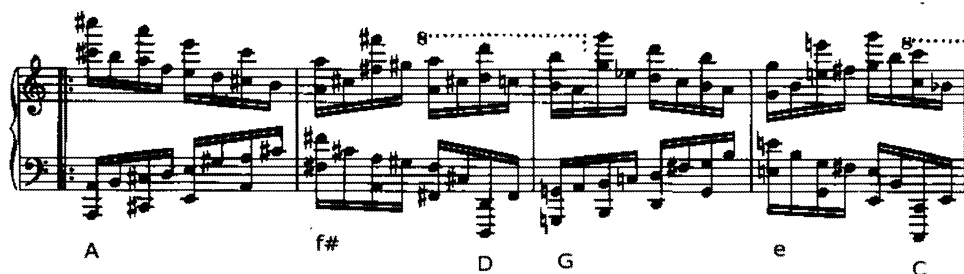


**Example 5.8b.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book 1, Var. 9, mm.



By using root progression chords moving in thirds, cycled through the circle of fifths.

**Example 5.9a.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book 2, Var. 11, mm. 5-8





**Example 5.9b.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book 2, Var. 2, mm.1-4

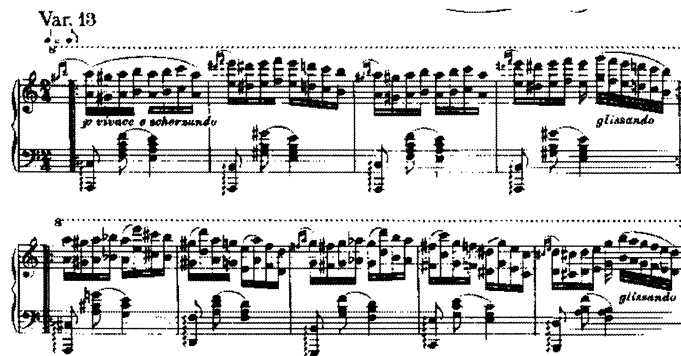


In addition, Brahms makes other modifications. For instance, he sometimes omits portions of the circle of 5<sup>th</sup>, such as in Variation 1 and 2, Book I. At the beginning of the second section in most of the variations, an A major tonic triad replaces the minor triad of the theme. Brahms might have used a major chord not only for a different harmonic color, but more importantly, to direct harmonic motion through the circle of fifths. Secondly, the ii<sup>o</sup> chord of A minor is often changed to the Neapolitan sixth chord (Bb-D-F) of A minor in the second section, as seen in Variations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10 of Book I; 7, 8, 10, and 11 of Book II. However, the original ii<sup>o</sup> is kept in Variation 13 of Book I, as well as in Variation 5 of Book II.

### Melodic and Rhythmic Elements

Melodic and rhythmic patterns from the original theme are mostly retained. First, the idea of the grace notes from the opening is retained.

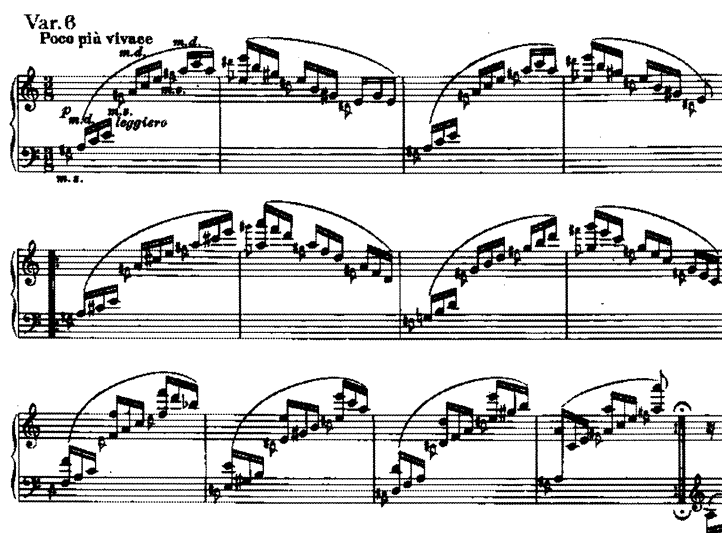
**Example 5.10a,** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book I, Var. 13, mm. 1-8



**Example 5.10b, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book II, Var. 4, mm. 1-8**



**Example 5.10c, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Book II, Var. 6**



Second, the repeated notes of the theme are retained in Variations 1, 2, and 14 of Book I; 5 of book II.

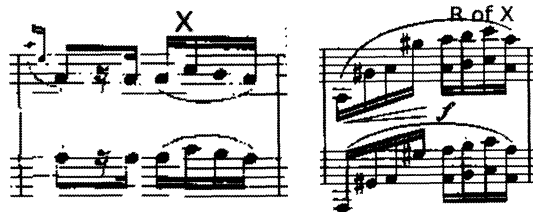
**Example 5.11, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 5, Book II**



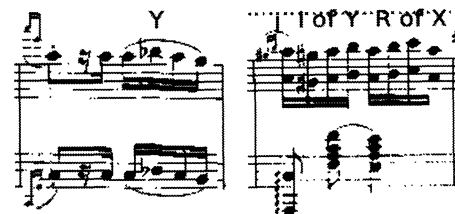
Third, Brahms's melodic motives derived from the interval of the original motive appear in many of the variations. In the following examples, Motive X is an interval of a third and motive Y consists of an interval of a second. Both motives are often combined in the form of inversion and retrograde.

**Example 5.12, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Two Motives**

Motive "X"

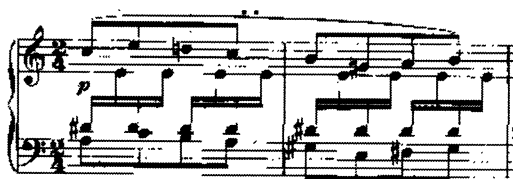


Motive "Y"

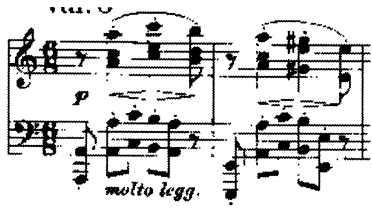


These motives are also transposed and disguised by different rhythmic patterns.

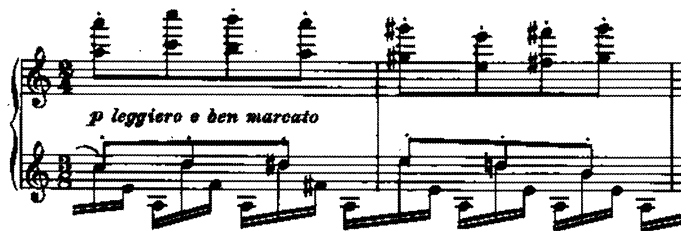
**Example 5.13a, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Finale, Book I, mm. 35-36, Motive X and its inversion**



**Example 5.13b**, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 6, Book I, mm.1-2, Motive X and part of its inversion



**Example 5.13c**, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 7, Book II, mm. 1-2

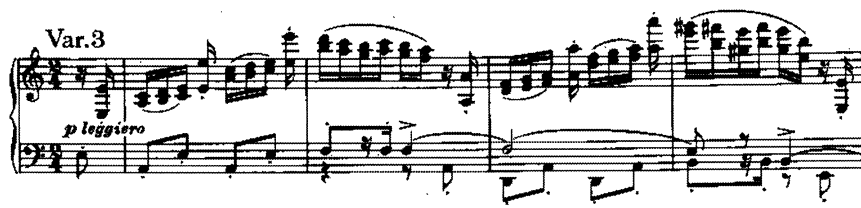


The following example demonstrates a series of three notes taken from the theme “A-C-B-A.”

**Example 5.13d**, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var.5, Book II, mm. 1-2



**Example 5.13f**, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 3, Book II, mm. 1-4




The leading tone is also used frequently. In Variation 13 of Book I (see example 5.11a) as well as Variation 6 of Book II (see example 5.11c), the leading tone is used as a grace note while the leading tone in Variation 10 of Book II combines with the arpeggio and is prolonged.

**Example 5.14, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 10, Book II, mm.4-10**

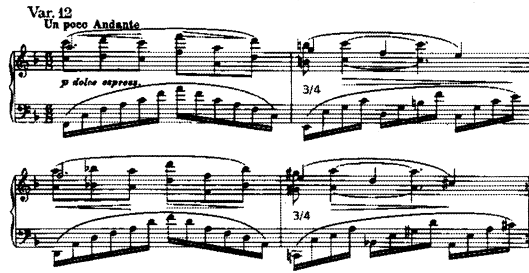


### Rhythm

The rhythmic pattern of the theme  is clearly a stating point. It is retained in whole or in part, in many of the variations. For example, the 11<sup>th</sup> variation of Book I is based on the complete rhythmic figure, where Variations 1, 2, and 9 of Book I are based on only the second portion of the rhythmic motive. This pattern is presented in different tempos and different dynamics resulting in a totally different sound.

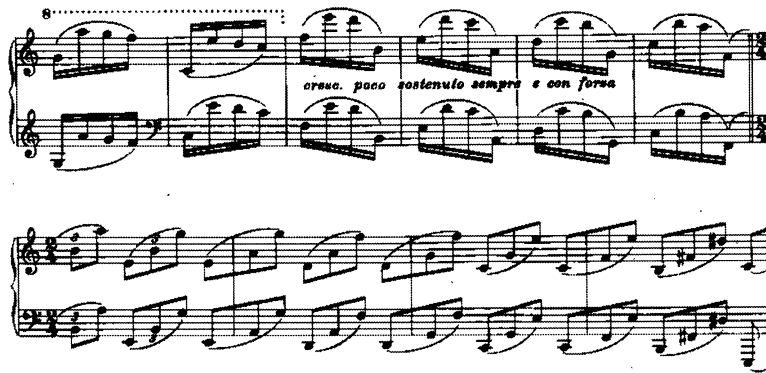
However, Brahms's rhythmic invention is very sophisticated. In the following example, Brahms marks the meter as 6/8, but looking closely, the meter 6/8 alternates with  $\frac{3}{4}$ , creating a hemiola, one of Brahms's favorite rhythmic devices.

**Example 5.15,** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 12, Book II



In Example 5.16, rhythmic displacement is seen in the transition between the triplets and the four sixteenth notes that are displayed across the bar.

**Example 5.16,** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 14, book II, mm. 59-68



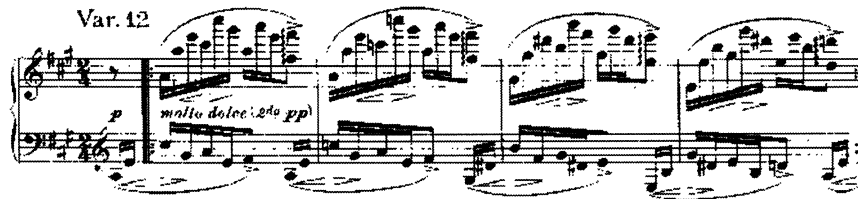
In Variation 7 of Book II, a polyrhythm, 2/4 against 3/8, presents a different kind of cross-rhythm – four against nine—between staccato octaves and a counter melody, with the melody placed in the middle of the triplet (see example 5.14c).

## Texture

In general, Brahms's texture is very thick because of his use of thirds, sixths, and octaves in most variations. Although most of the variations are homophonic, monophonic and polyphonic approaches are found in some of the variations. Brahms starts the theme monophonically, in octaves, with an occasional addition of a chord on the downbeat. Other monophonic approaches include dividing the melodic line between the two hands, as found in Variation 3 of Book I, and 6 of Book II, and doubling the melodic line in octaves, as in Variation 9 and 10 of Book II.

Polyphonic texture is created by polyrhythm (Variation 7, Book II) or imitation (Variation 12 of Book II, Variation 6 of Book I, and the finale of Book I).

**Example 5.17a**, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 12 Book I, mm. 1-4



This Variation is in canonic form at the octave, however, the right hand imitation is particularly interesting, for its embellishment such as broken octaves and triplets.

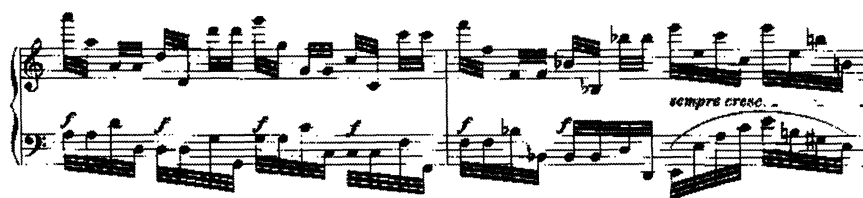
In Variation 6 of Book I, the left hand is imitated by the right hand in free augmentation.

**Example 5.17b**, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 6, Book I



Canonic imitation can also be seen in the following example:

**Example 5.17c**, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Finale, mm. 27-28

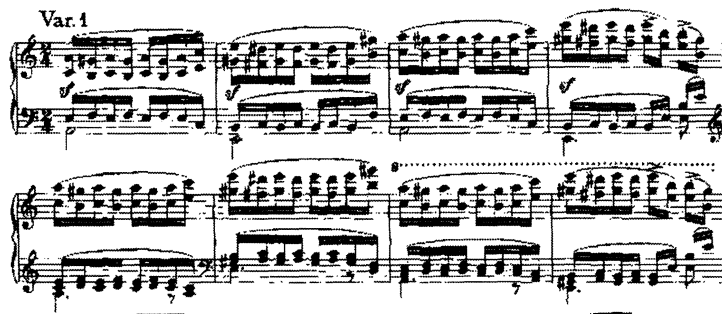


Brahms also takes advantage of the written out repeats to vary the repetitions.

Some examples are:

1. Each repetition is one octave higher or lower with an insertion of extra notes or chords, as in Variations 1, 2, 3, and 5 of Book I.

**Example 5.18a**, Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 1, Book 1, mm. 1-4





2. The right hand and the left hand are reversed or in invertible counterpoint in the repetition, such as in Variation 4 from Book I, and Variations 1 and 7 of Book II.

**Example 5.18b.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 4, Book 1, mm. 1-16



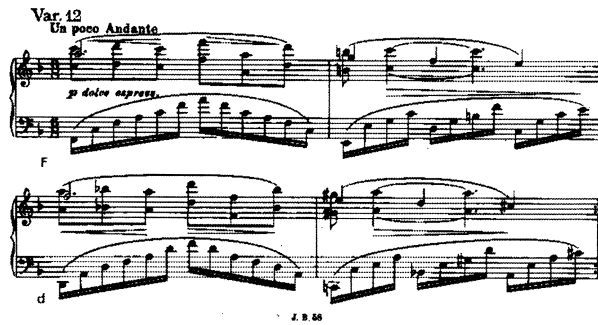
3. The repetition is in contrary motion to the first phrase, as in Variation 7 of Book I.

**Example 5.18c.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 7, Book 1, mm. 1-4



4. The repetition is in a different key, as seen in Variation 12 from Book II.

**Example 5.18d.** Brahms, *Paganini Variations*, Var. 12, Book II



Brahms's *Paganini Variations* are unique not only in the ingenious and original treatment of theme, but also in their division into two sets. Although it's been done quite often in the modern day, Brahms never intended that pianists should perform the entire two sets at one setting. Heinrich Barth, who first performed them in England in 1880, made a selection that received the tacit approval of the composer. The order in which he played them was: Book I: 1, 3, 5, and 9; Book II: 6, 8, and 12; Book I: 10, 11, 4, 13, and 14.<sup>36</sup> This interesting record reveals that Brahms acknowledges each variation as a somewhat independent entity. Therefore, Brahms's *Paganini Variations* may be considered a collection of individual technical studies.

In constructing his variations on Paganini's theme, Brahms kept the phrase structure, strong, clear harmonic progression, and a harmonic rhythm of the theme. He develops the progression motivically, rhythmically and texturally and adds chromaticism. The result is a compendium of both pianistic and compositional studies, demonstrating very emotionally Brahms's full range of compositional nuances.

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in H. G. Sear, 108. Sear talks about another set of variations on this same theme in A minor by Mark Hambourg, published in 1902 and dedicated to his teacher Leschetizky.

## CHAPTER VI

### RACHMANINOFF AND RHAPSODY ON A THEME OF PAGANINI

#### OP.43

##### Introduction

Following Liszt and Brahms, Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini for Piano and Orchestra*, Op.43 (1934) also takes its theme from the famous A minor *Caprice* by Paganini. One might think it would be difficult to add anything new, but unlike a simple transcription of Paganini's original violin work for the keyboard or as a collection of etudes, Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody* is symphonic, rhapsodic, and freer in nature, expanding its musical means to the piano and the orchestra with a variety of tone colors. Since Rachmaninoff is freer with the harmonic progression and phrase structure, he sticks more rigorously to the theme's motives to maintain continuity and comprehensibility: in that sense, the work has features of motivic development characteristic of a symphony or concerto. It is a hybrid of a classical theme and variations and a musical drama, creating a narrative on the original theme. The traditional form of Theme and Variations now arrives at a new frontier.

Like Liszt, Rachmaninoff is well known as one of the greatest pianists of all time. He possessed a charisma that immediately impressed his listeners. According to Sorabji, "Rachmaninoff's strongly magnetic and compelling personality, and its most attractive combination of restraint and dignity" enthralled audiences and placed him in

the highest rank among the greatest pianists.<sup>37</sup> Medtner once wrote, “This (Rachmaninoff) sound, in score or keyboard, is never neutral, impersonal, empty. It is as distinct from other sounds as a bell is different from street noises; it is the result of incomparable intensity, flame, and the saturation of beauty.”<sup>38</sup> Harold Schonberg said, “There never was any *Kitsch* to Rachmaninoff’s playing, even when the music was *Kitsch*. So big were his musical thoughts, so aristocratic his instincts, that he ennobled whatever he played.”<sup>39</sup> Other great pianists such as Horowitz and Schnabel also worshiped Rachmaninoff’s “sovereign style, a combination of grandeur and daring, the naturalness and the giving of his whole self.”<sup>40</sup>

As a composer, Rachmaninoff’s approach was rather traditional compared to his contemporaries. He was mainly influenced by Chopin, Liszt, and Tchaikovsky and rooted firmly in the style of the Romantic period. This was at odds with the musical avant-garde. Schoenberg, who had introduced the concept of atonal music in 1908, developed the twelve-tone method in the early 1920s. Along with Webern and Berg, they continued to refine the system in the following decades. Stravinsky pushed Russian musical nationalism to its limits with *Le Sacre du Printemps* in 1913. By the time Rachmaninoff wrote the *Rhapsody*, the above works and Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), Bartok’s *Miraculous Mandarin* (1919), Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924),

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<sup>37</sup> Kaikhosru Sorabji, Rachmaninoff, Albert Hall, Nov. 24, 1929. *New Age*, 5 December, 56. In his book *Rachmaninoff*, Barrie Martyn quotes one anecdote from the famous concert manager Wilfrid van Wyck reminiscing (1981) about Rachmaninoff’s charisma in front of audiences: “Once, at a Queen’s Hall recital, there was an epidemic of sneezing and throat clearing, Rachmaninoff glanced around the hall, ‘like a weary bloodhound’ and the noise stopped dead.” See Barrie Martyn, *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 397.

<sup>38</sup> John Holmes, *Composers on Composers* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1990), 115.

<sup>39</sup> Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianist* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 391.

<sup>40</sup> Artur Schnabel, a posthumous tribute to Rachmaninoff in *The New York World Telegram*, 3 April, 1943. Quoted in Martyn, 396.

Berg's opera *Wozzeck* and Schoenberg's *Variations for Orchestra, Op. 31* (1926/28) had been shaping the way of music throughout Europe and America.

As a great composer-pianist, Rachmaninoff's performances always reflected a profound understanding of musical structure and were never merely instinctive interpretation. He studied pieces thoroughly not only as a pianist, but from the perspective of a composer. In an interview with Basil Maine from *Musical Opinion*, Rachmaninoff talks about the advantages of being both a performer and a composer:

If you are a composer you have an affinity with other composers. You can make contact with their imaginations, knowing something of their problems and ideals. You can give their works *colour*. That is the most important thing for me in my pianoforte interpretations, *colour*. So you can make the music live. Without colour it is dead...The great interpreters in the past were composers in most instances. Paganini, so we understand, was a king of virtuosity...but he was a composer too. Liszt and Rubinstein; and in our time Paderewski and Kreisler. Ah! I know what you are thinking. But it doesn't matter. It makes no difference whether there are first- or fourth-rate composers. What matters is, they had the creative mind and so were able to communicate with other minds of the same order.<sup>41</sup>

It is interesting to note that Rachmaninoff performed the variations on the same theme by Liszt and Brahms before he composed his own version.<sup>42</sup> It is especially noteworthy that after Rachmaninoff set down the earliest sketch materials, which are his initial manipulations of the Paganini theme, circa 1923-1926, he included Liszt's

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<sup>41</sup> Basil Maine, "Conversation with Rachmaninoff," *Musical Opinion*, Vol.60 (1936), 14-15.

<sup>42</sup> See Rachmaninoff's piano repertoire in Martyn, The list of Rachmaninoff's repertoire includes every work he played in public from his debut in 1892 to his death in 1943. According to this, he played not only the A minor *Paganini Variations* by Liszt and Brahms, but also most of *Grand Paganini Etudes* by Liszt and *Studies after Caprices by Paganini* by Schumann, which are based on other caprices from Paganini's set. Moreover, this list shows that he was very interested in exploring piano variations by various major composers: 32 *Variations* by Beethoven, *Air and Variations in B flat* by Handel, *Variations in F major* by Haydn, *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*-Variations after Bach by Liszt, *Variations sérieuses* Op. 54 by Mendelssohn, *Gavotte and Variations in A minor* by Rameau, *Symphonic Studies*, Op. 13 by Schumann, and *Theme and Variations*, Op. 19, No. 6 by Tchaikovsky.

Paganini Variations No. 6, *Theme and Variations* in his performance repertoire for the season 1927-28.<sup>43</sup>

The *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 43*, was written in Rachmaninoff's last period, as his last work in the concerto genre. From this period (1927-1941), Rachmaninoff also composed *Variations on a Theme by Corelli*, Op. 42 (1931) for solo piano, his *Symphony No. 3*, Op. 44 (1935-1936), *Symphonic Dances*, Op. 45 (1940), and revised his *Piano Sonata No. 2* (1931), *Piano Concerto No. 4* (1941), and four of his early piano pieces, (1940). The *Rhapsody* is sometimes called Rachmaninoff's Fifth Piano Concerto, because it is a large composition for piano and orchestra. But Rachmaninoff himself did not name this work a Concerto: the *Rhapsody* is a set of variations, a rather rare compositional form for soloist and orchestra. Only a few other composers had explored this genre: Liszt in his *Totentanz* for piano and orchestra; Franck in the *Symphonic Variations* for piano and orchestra; and Tchaikovsky in his *Variations on a Rococo Theme* for cello and orchestra.

In 1934 at his new home, "Villa Senar" in Hertenstein, Switzerland, Rachmaninoff completed his new work on August 18<sup>th</sup> and on the next day wrote to his sister-in-law, Sophia Satina, about his excitement over his piece:

...it's been long since I wrote to you—but ever since the very day of my return from Como and Monte Carlo on July 1, I've kept myself at work, working literally from morn to night, as they say. This work is rather a large one, and only yesterday, late at night, I finished it. Since morning my chief aim has been to write you. This piece is written for piano and orchestra, about 20-25 minutes in length. But it is not "concerto!" It is called Symphonic Variations on a theme by Paganini. I'll tell Foley (Rachmaninoff's publisher) to arrange for me to play it

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<sup>43</sup> See Martyn, 427. Rachmaninoff started to play Liszt's *Grandes Études de Paganini* in public in 1919 and performed these pieces (No.2, 3, 5, and 6) until 1936.

this coming season, in Philadelphia or Chicago. If he does not arrange it, and there is a little doubt of this, then you too will hear it. I am happy that I managed to write this piece during my first year in the new Senar. It's some compensation for the many stupidities I allowed myself in building Senar. Truth! I believe it!..You may speak of the "Variations" only to Somoff, but to no one else...<sup>44</sup>

Rachmaninoff soon modified the title. Three weeks later, he wrote to his old friend Vladimir Wilshaw, a pianist and professor at the Moscow Conservatory. In the letter, he wrote:

...Two weeks ago I finished a new piece: it's called a Fantasia for piano and orchestra in the form of variations on a theme by Paganini. The piece is rather long, 20-25 minutes, about the length of a piano concerto. I'll give it to the printer next spring—after I try to play it in New York and London, which will give me time to make necessary corrections. The thing's rather difficult; I must begin learning it, but I get lazier every year with work on my fingers. I try to get by with some old piece that already sits in the fingers...<sup>45</sup>

Once again, Rachmaninoff changed his mind about the title, calling the work simply "Rhapsody" in his letter on October 25, 1934, to his friends, the Swans:

Dear Ekaterina Vladimirovna and Alfred Alfredovich, I know that you wanted to get to the rehearsal of my *Rhapsody* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, but unfortunately I was unable to arrange it for you. The first public performance of the *Rhapsody* will take place in Baltimore on the night of the 7<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>46</sup>

The *Rhapsody* was first performed in Baltimore on November 7, 1934, with Rachmaninoff himself as soloist, and the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowsky. The premiere was a huge success. Later the same year, Rachmaninoff

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda. *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A lifetime in Music* (New York, New York University Press, 1956), 304

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*, 305

<sup>46</sup> Alfred Julious Swan and Katherine Swan. "Rachmaninoff-Personal Reminiscences, Part II" *The Musical Quarterly* XXX/2 (1944):187

recorded on the RCA label with the same orchestra and conductor. Subsequent performances by the New York Philharmonic received enthusiastic reviews:

The Rachmaninoff variations, written with all of the composer's skill turned out to be the most successful novelty that the philharmonic Symphony has had since Mr. Toscanini overwhelmed the subscribers with Ravel's *Bolero*. Of course, the *Rhapsody* had the advantage of Mr. Rachmaninoff's pianism and Mr. Walter's adroit direction of ensemble music, but the succession of brilliances for the piano, dramatic references to the *Dies Irae*, wide-open Shmalz for divided strings, and old-fashioned bravura was enough to insure success. The *Rhapsody* isn't philosophical, significant, or even artistic. It's something for audiences, and what our orchestras need at the moment is more music for audiences. More music for audiences means more audiences for music, and with this sage apothegm, I conclude another salute to Mr. Rachmaninoff.<sup>47</sup>

In total, Rachmaninoff performed the *Rhapsody* 46 times throughout his career. In his last performance season in 1942-43, Rachmaninoff played the *Rhapsody* with the New York Philharmonic under Dimitri Mitropoulos in December, even though he was already suffering from lumbago and a constant cough. In the following February he played the *Rhapsody* twice again in Chicago—his last concerts.

Although Rachmaninoff left no direct programmatic associations for the *Rhapsody* from the time when he composed it, about three years *after* the completion of the piece Rachmaninoff envisioned the *Rhapsody* as a ballet about Paganini. He discussed this idea with the famous choreographer Mikhail Fokine:

About the *Rhapsody*, I wanted to tell you that I shall be very happy if you make something out of it. Last night I was thinking about a subject, and this is what came to mind: I give only the main outlines, for the details are still hazy to me. Why not recreate the legend of Paganini selling his soul to the Evil Spirit for perfection in art and also for a woman? All the variations on *Dies Irae* represent the Evil Spirit. All those in the middle, from variation 11 to 18, are the love

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<sup>47</sup> Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leyda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1965), 309.



episodes. Paganini appears (for the first time) in the “theme” and, defeated, appears for the last time in the 23<sup>rd</sup> variation – the first 12 bars – after which, until the end, it is the triumph of his conquerors. The first appearance of the Evil Spirit is the 7<sup>th</sup> variation, where at figure 19 theme can be a dialogue with Paganini, when his theme appears alongside *Dies Irae*. Variations 8, 9 and 10 are the progress of the Evil Spirit. The 11<sup>th</sup> variation is the transition to the realm of lover; the 12<sup>th</sup> variation, the minuet, is the first appearance of the woman, up to the 18<sup>th</sup> variation. The 13<sup>th</sup> variation is the first appearance of the woman with Paganini. The 19<sup>th</sup> variation is the triumph of Paganini’s art, his diabolical pizzicato. It would be good to represent Paganini with a violin, not a real one of course, but some kind of made-up, fantastical one. Another thing: it seems to me that at the end of the play some of the characters (representing) the Evil Spirit in the struggle for the woman and art should look like caricatures, absolute caricatures, of Paganini himself. And they must here have violins even more fantastically grotesque. You will not laugh at me?<sup>48</sup>

Fokine accepted Rachmaninoff’s suggestions as the basis of the surrealist Paganini ballet he created and staged with success at Covent Garden in London on June 30, 1939 and the following year in New York.

These letters Rachmaninoff wrote to his friends show that it was perhaps the composer’s intention from the very beginning that the *Rhapsody* was not just going to be a set of standard Theme and Variations for piano and orchestra, but also a much more adventurous, somewhat programmatic work.

### **Overall Tonal Structure**

Rachmaninoff’s *Rhapsody* starts with a short Introduction, which is followed immediately by Variation 1; only after this is the theme presented. This is an unusual feature since the standard Theme and Variation usually begins with the theme and followed by its variations. On a larger scale, this work which consists of 24 variations may be divided into three sections, corresponding to the form of a concerto or a

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<sup>48</sup> Rachmaninoff to Fokine, 29 August 1937, cited in Martyn, 327-8.

symphonic work: the first moderately fast, the second slow, and the third fast throughout. This is also different from the traditional structure we have seen in Liszt, Brahms and Lutosławski's versions. While their Paganini Variations remain largely rooted in the tonic key, Rachmaninoff's tonal plan is much more adventurous:

1. Opening section—Introduction, Variation 1, Theme, and Variations 2-10 in A minor  
Variation 11 – transition to Variation 12, preparing the dominant of D minor
2. Slow section—Variations 12-18 in D minor, F major, B flat minor, D flat major
3. Last section—Variations 19-24 in A minor.

After the nine-bar of Introduction, Variation 1 for orchestra alone introduces the harmonic progression that underlines the theme. Variation 11 serves as the tonal transition from A minor to D minor, presenting a cadenza-like piano solo and eventually establishing the dominant of D minor. The middle group begins with Variation 12. The variations explore various keys—D minor (Variations 12 and 13), F major (Variations 14 and 15), Bb minor (Variations 16 and 17), and finally ending with the famous 18th variation in Db major. The last section returns to the home key of A minor and is made up of the final 6 variations. These last variations are virtuosic, exploring various rhythmic devices, and gradually build to an exciting finale.

### **Section I—Traditional Treatment of the Theme and Variation Form**

The first section is the most traditional treatment of the theme. It demonstrates a compositional procedure based on gradual growth on several different levels. Similar to what Brahms had done in his composition, Rachmaninoff extends the theme to twenty-

four bars with repetition, producing the structure of AABB+. Section A is rather simple, while B grows out of or is derived from A, and B+ grows to become even more ornamental. Secondly, from the beginning to the fifth variation, the scoring for piano is pared down to a bare minimum, using single notes, single hand at a time, melodies in parallel motion in eighth or quarter notes, and at the most engaging moment, figurations of sixteenth notes that alternate between two hands. From Variation 5 to 8, Rachmaninoff treats the original theme more elaborately. In the seventh variation, he also uses *Dies Irae* as an added theme. Compared to the other three etude-like compositions, this beginning section is distinctively simpler.

In the statement of the theme, the violins closely copy the Paganini original, while the piano accompaniment repeats almost exactly what was played by the orchestra alone in the first variation. It consists of an eight-measure A section (mm.34-41), which contains a repeated four-measure phrase, and an extended B section of sixteen measures (mm.42-57) within which an eight-measure phrase is also repeated.

Rachmaninoff's harmonization of the Theme is almost identical to Brahms's. The A section features an alternation of I and V, and the B section a sequence leading from I through IV to II and a return to I via an augmented sixth chord and the V (example 6.1).

**Example 6.1** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Theme, mm. 34-57





Having the orchestra introducing the theme corresponds to the typical structural organization of piano concertos, where the entrance of the soloist is prepared by a substantial passage for the orchestra. Here the theme is simple and straightforward.

Variation 3 features the orchestra and piano both playing a variant of the theme instead of a clear statement of it. The piano presents a version in octaves against a running sixteenth-note melodic figure in the orchestra. The phrase structure is similar to the original theme but slightly extended—the original eight-bar A section is expanded to twelve bars (mm.82-93, example 6.2) and the sixteen-bar B section to nineteen bars (mm.94-112) as follows:

A (six bars), A+ (six bars), B (nine bars), and B+ (ten bars)

Despite its irregular phrasing structure, the sectional orientation of this variation stays true to the theme. Harmonically, it remains in A minor, as did the original theme, and the B section recalls the descending sequential material from IV to I.

**Example 6.2** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 3, mm. 82-93

The 4<sup>th</sup> variation is based on the original sixteen-note head motive (A-C-B-A-E) throughout, exploring various shapes and forms of the motive, including its inversions. On the surface it is reminiscent of the original Theme, but Rachmaninoff plays with the phrase structure—the A section is now twice as long (example 6.3a) and each of the B section is extended by four measures:

A (eight bars), A+ (eight bars), B (twelve-bars), B+ (twelve-bars)

Harmonically the A section is set in the home key of A minor. The B section is motivically similar to the A section, but it is set in A major (example 6.3b). For the first time, Rachmaninoff begins to distort the original theme's underlying progression.

**Example 6.3a** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 4, mm. 113-120, Section A (eight bars)

**Example 6.3b** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 4, mm. 129-140, Section B, (twelve bars, in A major)

The framing notes of the entire variation are A and E, tonic and dominant, the core of the Paganini theme. Another interesting detail is that not only does each section of the variation start off on the note A, and end on E, but the harmonic progressions consistently focus on tonic-dominant relations. Furthermore, the last four measures of

this variation also consist of a chromatic ascending scale that starts off on e and ends on A (Example 6.3c). This demonstrates another aspect of Rachmaninoff's intention to stay rather close to the theme in the beginning of the piece.

**Example 6.3c** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 4, mm.149-152



Variation 5 brings a unique textural change, in which the piano and orchestra now alternate and only rarely overlap. The rhythm fits tightly between the piano and the orchestra, making it sound very exciting when the two parts are put together seamlessly. One might think that Rachmaninoff is now taking off from the original theme, but both of the harmonic progression and the phrase structure still resemble that of the original theme: A (four bars), A+ (four bars), B (fourteen bars), B+ (fourteen bars).

Harmonically, the A section stays in A and alternates the tonic and dominant while the B section descends in sequence (example 6.4)

**Example 6.4a** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 5, mm. 153-155





moderate alterations such as textural or rhythmic changes, he maintains the basic harmonic outline as well as the 2-part phrase structure of the original theme.

### **Motivic Development**

Starting from Var. 7, there is a noticeable change of the character as the tempo changes more frequently and the variations become longer. One can still hear elements of the original theme but the music becomes more and more complex. Rachmaninoff is also more adventures with the harmony as well as the motives of the original Paganini theme.

In order to demonstrate Rachmaninoff's motivic development in this work, let us first examine the motivic elements that are preserved and varied either implicitly or explicitly throughout the variations.

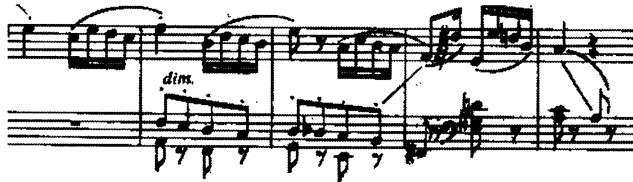
1. The sixteenth-note melodic figure A-C-B-A-E heard in the original Paganini theme. This gesture also signifies the rising fifth A-E. We will name this the "head motive."



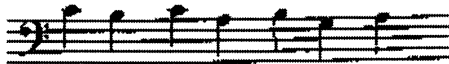
2. In the B section of the main theme, Rachmaninoff presents a descending fourth motive, A-G-F-E. We will refer this as the "descending fourth motive". This motive occurs in the Theme and is presented through variations, a related ascending four note figure E-F#-G-A in the bass line of the opening measures will be designated as the "inverted descending fourth motif."



3. The double neighbor figure E-F-[E]-D#-E, which is implied by the voice-leading in the B section of the theme. In the key of A minor, its scale degrees are 5-6-5-#4-5.



4. The *Dies Irae* motive, which was added as an additional theme in Var. 7. Rachmaninoff explores the dramatic relationship between the Paganini theme and the *Dies Irae* theme in theme and variations form throughout the *Rhapsody*.



From Var. 7 onward, these four motives become the basis of extensive elaboration of the original theme. At Var. 7, Rachmaninoff introduces the *Dies Irae*<sup>49</sup> for the first time. Its rather dark atmosphere offers a contrasting character to the more light-hearted nineteenth-century Paganini theme. To heighten the dramatic effect of the added theme, Rachmaninoff slows down the tempo with the indication of *meno mosso, a tempo moderato*. He also introduces new rhythms and articulations. In other words, everything

<sup>49</sup> As one of four sequences retained by the Council of Trent in the Catholic Church, the melody of *Dies Irae* was often used in the Requiem Mass as an integral part of the setting. For secular and non-liturgical use, composers borrow the tune to evoke the appropriate atmosphere of an element of the supernatural, wicked powers, madness, and death.

but the harmony is new in this Variation. This is one of the first major dramatic moments of the piece. Not only does it introduce a new theme with a new mood, but it also joins the two themes over the same harmonic foundation. This corresponds programmatically in Rachmaninoff's ballet scenes to the "love episode."

Rachmaninoff states the *Dies Irae* motive in the piano part first, presenting it as a counterpoint to the Paganini theme in the orchestra. The *Dies Irae* flows slowly in half notes while the orchestra augments the sixteenth-note motive from the Theme to the eighth notes underneath the tune; this rhythmic juxtaposition creates the interesting illusion that the *Dies Irae* is a slowly-moving *cantus firmus* and the orchestral counterpart an added melody.

**Example 6.5a** Rachmaninoff *Rhapsody*, Var. 7 mm. 243-249

18

Var. VII  
Meno mosso, a tempo moderato

The musical score for Variation VII of Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody, measures 243-249, is presented. The tempo is 'Meno mosso, a tempo moderato'. The piano part (I and II) is marked 'mf poco pesante' and the orchestra part is marked 'p'. The piano part shows a sequence of chords labeled I, V, I, IV, and 8. The orchestra part shows a sequence of chords labeled I, V, I, IV, and 8.

Harmonic alterations are necessary to fit the two themes together. When Rachmaninoff first introduces the *Dies Irae* theme and combines it with the original theme, he also adjusts the harmonic structure of the Theme to accommodate the newly introduced motive (example 6.5a). Notice now the alternation of I and IV in the theme substitutes for I and V (m.246). While Rachmaninoff preserves the essential harmonic

structure of the B section (I-IV-bII-V (III6)) (mm.259-284), the falling motive of the *Dies Irae* is also transformed at various pitch levels as a sequential pattern.<sup>50</sup> The descending-fourth motive from A-G-F- E, is now transposed to G-F-E-D (mm.269-279) within the framing motion of IV to bII6 from measure 265-279, reminiscent of the B section of the Theme (example 6.5b).

**Example 6.5b** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var.7, mm. 263-279

The musical score for Variation 7, measures 263-279, is presented in a multi-staff format. The top system includes staves for Piano I and II, and Violin I. The piano part features a series of chords and melodic fragments, with dynamic markings such as 'dim.' and 'f'. The Violin I part has a melodic line with a 'poco marcato' marking. The bottom system continues the piano part with further harmonic development, including a 'bII6' chord and an 'etc.' marking. The score is written in a key with one flat and a 2/4 time signature.

Var. 7 is significant for two reasons. First of all, Rachmaninoff introduces the *Dies Irae* motive and combines it with fragments of the original theme. Secondly, the original motive (A-C-B-A) is varied at a different pitch levels according to the sequential

<sup>50</sup> For example, E-D-E-C#-D (mm.259-262), D-C-D-B-C (mm. 263-268), G-F-G-E-F (mm.269-272), F-E-F-D-E (mm.272-276), Bb-A-Bb-G-Ab-F-G (mm.270-277) in the orchestra.

pattern of the *Dies Irae*. Therefore Rachmaninoff's treatment has begun to become more expansive.

Var. 8 continues the gradual increase in complexity. In the variations that follow, there is a progressive expansion of various performance techniques, complex rhythm and meter shifts, sudden changes of tempi, to name a few. Besides these traditional methods of the theme and variations, Rachmaninoff also places a greater emphasis on the melodic and motivic elements of the theme.

The tenth variation marks the end of the first section of the *Rhapsody*. Contrary to its first appearance in Var. 7, in Var. 10 the piano solo presents the *Dies Irae* motive right away in a heavy gait in a low register with half notes and whole notes, which the bass line in the orchestra articulates the first four notes of the *Dies Irae* tune (A-G-A-F). Starting in m. 384 (rehearsal number 29), the right hand of the piano is a variation of the Paganini Theme, and both the left hand of the piano and orchestra present the *Dies Irae* in alternating eighth notes (example 6.6).

**Example 6.6** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 10, mm. 382-386



Example 6.6 lasts for eight measures and is immediately followed by the brass instruments stating the *Dies Irae* again, this time in a more straight-forward manner in quarter notes, marked *poco marcato*. The piano descends chromatically over four measures of sixteenth and eighth notes (example 6.7).

#### Example 6.7 Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 10, mm. 392-395

The last four bars of this variation (mm. 396-399) also formulate an interesting structure. There are four segments of material that continues the sixteenth-note rhythmic material from earlier of the variation. The first two bars are a variant of the *Dies Irae* in diminution, with the second phrase a sixth below the first; the third is the sixteenth-note head motif (A-C-B-A-E), which is answered in the orchestra a fifth above. The ending presents a dominant-tonic resolution in octaves. Here Rachmaninoff once again combines three different motives into four short bar of music (example 6.8).

**Example 6.8** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 10, mm. 396-399



Unlike the first five variations, it is no longer obvious to hear the unambiguous harmonic and phrase structure of Paganini's theme.

## Section II—Further Motivic Development

Var. 12 marks an important point. The tonal gravity shifts from A minor to D minor. This is the start of the work's middle section, in which Rachmaninoff leaves the home key. He also changes the metric and rhythmic character in this variation. The meter changes from duple (2/4) to triple (3/4). The sixteenth-note head motive is transformed and heard in the orchestra by a free augmentation in D minor (D-F-A) at a

slower tempo of half-note and quarter note rhythms throughout the variations (example 6.9).

**Example 6.9** Transformation of head motive in Var. 12



While the orchestra retains the implicit motivic idea of arpeggiation from the original sixteenth-note head motive, the piano brings out the initial half-step figure in the *Dies Irae* motive (F-E-F-E-F-D-E) in mm.419-424 and then elegantly weaves the motive's continuation into the dotted rhythm of the *Minuetto* (Example 6.10). As in previous variations containing the *Dies Irae* (Variations VII and X), Rachmaninoff manages to find another way to vary both the original sixteenth-note head motive and the *Dies Irae* motive, and to juxtapose them differently each time.

**Example 6.10** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody* Var. 12, mm. 415-424





Compared to the earlier variations, these middle variations offer different moods and colors and they are tonally and motivically adventurous. However, while Rachmaninoff continues to find new ways to vary the original Paganini theme, he still provides stability with a simple and square structure of the original theme in some variations.

For instance, the ninth variation delivers an extremely exciting and almost jazzy rhythmic effect. The piano alternates eighth-note rests and eighth notes, having the two eighth notes in each measure fall on the weak beats of the duple meter. The orchestra is playing two triplets organized in duple meter. The third element of the triplets is often missing, but the first is accented and emphasized. This produces a complex rhythm of two against three, the pianist and orchestra stubbornly persist with their own patterns. Perhaps because of this fundamental complexity, Rachmaninoff keeps the basic four phrases, matching the structure of the Paganini theme: AABB+

A (8 bars (4+4)), A (8 bars(4+4)), B (12 bars(4+4+4)), and B+ (12 bars(4+4+4))

In Var. 13, the original theme is revisited in a heavy waltz in the orchestra. Now in the key of D minor, the original sixteenth-note head motif becomes eighth notes, and the original duple meter is now triple, but the basic harmonic and phrase structure stay very close to the original—the tonic and dominant relationship is still placed on the downbeat of each measure, as well as the structure of the Paganini theme, as follows:

A (4 bars), A (4 bars), B (8 bars), and B+ (8 bars)

In the last group of variations Rachmaninoff devises more bold ways to vary the theme. Not only does he continue to play with the motives and the original phrase

structure, he also introduces startling harmonies and key changes, as well as various rhythmic devices. Some variations are much longer and more complicated in harmony and form. These variations begin the journey of development and the *Rhapsody* becomes increasingly more complex. By masterfully twisting the abstract structure of the theme, the original Paganini theme is now no longer easily recognizable. Instead one finds that something completely new arising from it.

In Var. 16, the piano recalls the rhythmic pattern of the sixteenth-note head motive, although the intervals are completely altered. The oboe and English horn restate the original sixteenth-note head motive emphasizing Bb minor (m.571) (example 6.11).

**Example 6.11** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 16, mm.565-573

Var. XVI  
Allegretto

43

mf dolce e grazioso

Head motif in b-flat

pp

Finally the violin solo introduces a new melodic motive based on a double neighbor, Bb-Cb-Bb-Ab-Bb, which is reminiscent, rhythmically, of the sixteenth-note head motive, and melodically, of the double neighbor motive and the *Dies Irae* (example 6.12).

**Example 6.12** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 16, mm.587-590



Harmonically, this variation is in the key of Bb minor, a fifth down from the F major of the previous variation, which continues the pattern of progression (A minor-D-minor-F major) utilized so far into the second section.

In Var. 17, Rachmaninoff presents the double-neighbor motive in the piano: F-Gb-F-E-F. Here the “death” connotation of the “crossing” four-tone double-neighbor figure is intensified by the “dark” atmosphere created by “grumbling” figuration in the piano’s lower register combined with relatively soft dynamics.

As shown in Example 6.13a, the double-neighbor motive occurs in the top voice of each group of three eighth notes: F-Gb-F-E-F. Each F is especially highlighted durationally by the quarter note, prepared with a small crescendo. In the upper voice of the piano, the F is transferred an octave higher in m. 617; sustained through m. 621, the F then proceeds to Gb in m.624 and immediately an octave lower in m.625, which then descend to E-natural at m. 627, and finally returns to F in mm. 628 and 630. This is a masterful enlargement of double-neighbor motive on different levels (example 6.13b).

**Example 6.13a.** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 17, mm. 613-614

VAR. XVII (M.M.  $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ )

Example 6.13b, Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 17, mm. 623-630

Compared to the earlier variations, this variation preserves the same length of the A and B sections of the Theme. There are eight measures of the A section before the

bass proceeds to Db in m. 621; through mm. 621-636, the B section takes place in sixteen measure, followed by an extra measure (m.637) which links Variation 17 and 18 by providing the dominant of the next key of Db major. However, this variation contains a different feature in construction of the A and B sections. Instead of a repeated alternation of tonic and dominant in the Theme's A section, Variation 17's A section sustains the tonic in Bb minor, and then presents the Ab major chord as a V of Db at its last measure (example 6.13c).

**Example 6.13c** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 17, mm. 620-621



Unlike the two repeated phrases of the B section in other variations, Var. 17 features a more through-composed style: the Db tonic sixth chord is prolonged through mm. 621-630, passing the third motion between F and Db, and proceeds to the structural dominant F through Eb. Thus, this variation has a unique phrase structure.

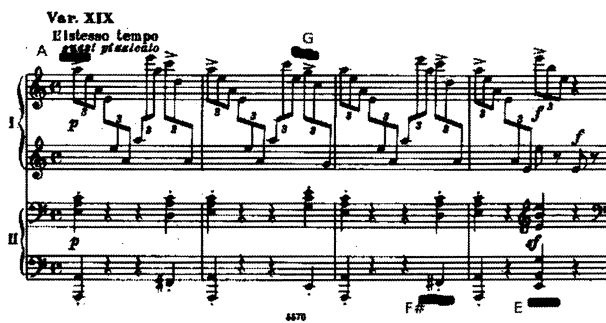
### Section III—Musical Narrative

The nineteenth Variation marks the start of the third section, which returns to the home key of A minor and showcases the pianist's virtuosity. In Var. 19 the descending-

fourth motive and its inverted form are superimposed upon each other in section A and its recomposed repetition.

In example 6.14a, the descending-fourth motive is laid out as A (m.686)-G (m.687)-F# (m.688) –E (m.689) in the first section of A (example 6.14a); then, as A (m.694)-G (m.695)- F (m.696-97)-E (m.698) in the recomposed repetition of the A section (example 6.14b).

**Example 6.14a**, Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 19, mm. 686-689



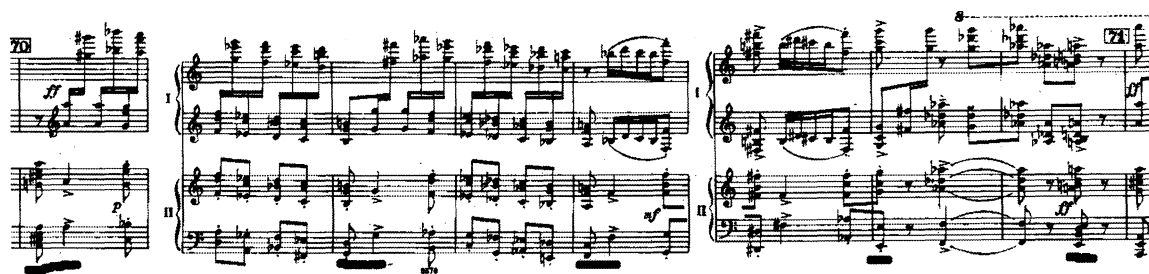
Meanwhile, the inversion of the descending-fourth motive imitates and crosses over the motif as E (mm.694 and 700) – F (m.696)-F#(mm.698-699 and 702-705) – G# (mm.699 and 705) – A (mm.699 and 705). In short, section A spells out the descending-fourth motive, then this motive is superimposed with its inverted form in section B and its recomposed repetition (example 6.14b).

**Example 6.14b** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 19, mm. 694-705, section B and repetition



The combination of the descending fourth motives and its inverted form is also found in Var. 23. As seen in example 6.15, the A major chord at m. 840 initiates the descending-fourth motion A-G-F-E, through mm. 832-847 within a prolongation of A. Notice that the inner voice articulates the chromatically filled-in ascending-fourth, A-Bb-B-C-Db (an inversion of the descending fourth motive), counterpointing the descending fourth motive.

**Example 6.15** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 23, mm. 840-847



In Var. 22, the descending fourth Motive dominates the piano by presenting the descending tetrachords throughout while the orchestra plays the sixteenth-note head motive (example 6.16a). This time this motive keeps getting higher through sequences

and build up to a statement of the *Dies Irae* theme in the piano (F-E-F-D-E-C-D) in mm. 776 to 777. It is immediately transposed a half step higher as F#-F-F#-D#-F-D-D# in mm. 778-779 and is harmonized with diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords throughout (example 6.16b).

**Example 6.16a** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 22, mm. 754-759

Var. XXII  
Marziale  
Un poco più vivo (alla breve)  
p  
pp  
pp

**Example 6.16b** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 22, mm. 776-801

[63] 8  
Plegato  
cresc.  
pp  
cresc.  
pp  
pp

At last the Paganini and *Dies Irae* themes are once again masterfully merged in the coda. Example 6.17 shows the Paganini theme occurring in the piano and *Dies Irae*



in the brass and strings. This restatement of both themes simultaneously brings the whole piece to a dramatic and ominous conclusion.

**Example 6.17** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Coda, mm. 911-919

As mentioned earlier, Rachmaninoff is also adventurous of the harmony in the last group of the variations. In Var. 22, the tetrachords keep getting higher by sequence until its arrival at the surprising *fortissimo* Eb major chord (m.786). This chord is startling—the listener hears the prolonged A (mm.753-785) as a dominant of D minor because of the constantly Bb and Eb, but instead of landing on the expected tonic, it resolves to Eb, a half step higher than expected (example 6.18).

**Example 6.18** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 22, mm. 782-786



After the arrival on Eb, the bass is sustained in an extended prolongation of Eb, including fast chromatic-scale passages (mm.786-798), embellished harp-like arpeggios (mm.799-811), and virtuosic cadenza (mm.812-819) in the piano solo. There are only two harmonic areas in this long and elaborate variation—A and Eb, without any structural closure in the key. The interval of the tritone is important for var. 22 as notes spelled out as A to Eb/D# or Bb/E are frequent across this Variation.

Calling attention to its tritonal relationship with the key of A minor, the prolongation of Eb/D# continues into the next variation, 23, structurally integrating the last part of the *Rhapsody*. Variation 23 starts with strong Eb octaves, then move to E-natural played by the orchestra. The Paganini Theme is immediately delivered by the piano in the key of Ab minor (m.824). This playful false tonic is followed by a surprising E major Chord; this functions as V of A minor in m. 831, which finally leads to the theme in the key of the home key of A minor (example 6.19).

**Example 6.19** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 23, mm. 820-832

77

Var. XXIII  
Piatoso tempo

The musical score for Variation XXIII is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a piano (piano) staff and a violin (violin) staff. The tempo is marked 'Piatoso tempo'. The key signature is A minor. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system shows the piano part with a forte (f) dynamic and the violin part with a piano (p) dynamic. The second system shows the piano part with a piano (p) dynamic and the violin part with a forte (f) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Rachmaninoff starts the last Variation in A minor (m.873), however, this A minor does not last long as a tonic; rather it is transformed immediately into A major two measures later (m. 876), it functions as dominant of D and is resolved to D minor in m. 877.

**Example 6.20** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 24, mm. 875-878



The prolongation of D begins with D minor in m. 877 and concludes with the emphatic D major chord in m.919, embracing the final statement of the *Dies Irae* at the last part (mm.911-917) and accomplishes a modal shift from minor to major (A minor to D major)(example 6.21).

**Example 6.21** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Coda, mm. 911-921

On a greater structural level, the bass D (m. 877) comes from F (m. 854) in the previous variation (Var. 23), resulting in a descending-third progression. Thus, A-F in Var. 23 is connected with F-D in Var. 24, creating an enlargement of the descending arpeggiated fifth motive, reminiscent of sixteenth-note head motive in its inversion. The progression from A to D through F, which occurs across Variations 23 and 24, is recomposed within the D prolongation in mm. 911-919 (example 6.21): remarkably, Rachmaninoff not only masterfully merges the Paganini Theme and the *Dies Irae*, he also achieves this recomposition of the inverted sixteenth-note head motive through the citation of the *Dies Irae*, which begins from A, then proceeds through F to D.

### **Variation Eighteen** *Andante Cantabile*

One cannot talk about Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody* without devoting special attention to the eighteenth variation. In general, Rachmaninoff's music is structured around a "culmination point," which he believed to be the climactic point of the entire piece. The eighteenth variation represents this point; it is the ultimate buildup of a love episode in this composition. Denoted as a second "love" episode by Rachmaninoff in the letter to Fokine, this variation has been used many times in movies ever since it was written in 1934, including *Somewhere in Time*, *Groundhog Day*, and *Sabrina*, to name a few. This association to "love" is perhaps due to its highly dramatic and romantic quality. With its extraordinarily different character, one might wonder how this magically beautiful and lyrical passage relates to the theme of Paganini's *Caprice*. The answer is surprising: it is derived by turning the entire Paganini theme upside down!

The following example illustrates both the original Paganini theme and Rachmaninoff's sketches of its inversion. Rachmaninoff first thought of the inversion of the melody in A major. Then, he transcribed it into Db major in the third line, and changed the meter from 2/4/ to 3/4 in the next line. The last line shows the triplet figure that appears throughout, particularly the ones played by the piano when the orchestra joins in with the main melody at m.650.

**Example 6. 22** Rachmaninoff's manipulation of the Paganini theme, Glinka MSS 18.1423, f. 32r.<sup>51</sup>

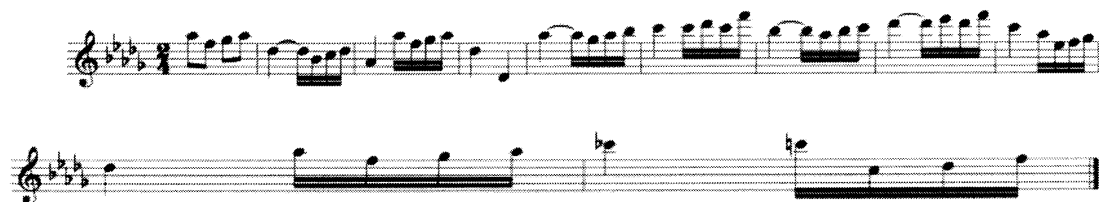
In A minor:



Now in E Major:

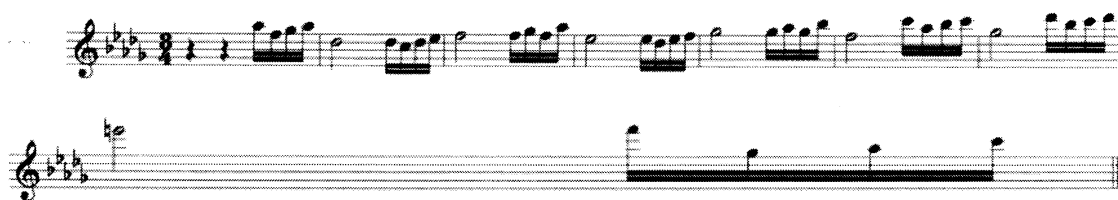


Transcribed to Db Major:



Now in 3/4 time:

<sup>51</sup> Transcribed and quoted from David Cannata, *Rachmaninoff and the Symphony* (Innsbruck-Wien: Studien Verlag, 1999), 57



Now in triplets



Var. 18 is in three sections, corresponding to Rachmaninoff's use of the piano and orchestra: In the first section the piano presents the solo melody (mm. 638-650, beat 1); in the second section the orchestra takes over and the piano becomes the accompaniment (mm.650, beat 3-661). Finally, in the last section, both piano and the orchestra intertwine and progressively unwind (mm.661-679).

The first section starts with the prolongation of Db played by the piano, the inverted sixteenth-note head motif (Ab-F-Gb-Ab-Db) and the whole-step descending motion Bb-C-Db-Ab (mm.639-643) are joined with the descending-fourth motif, as Ab-G-F-Fb-Eb in the inner voices (example 6.23a). Within the prolongation of the dominant of Ab in mm. 643-649, the upper voice articulates the ascending-fourth motive, as Ab-Bb-C-Db, in mm.643-648 (example 6.23b).

**Example 6.23a** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Variation 18, mm. 638-643



**Example 6.23b** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Variation 18, mm. 643-648



After the sequence at m. 648, the melody is transferred to an octave higher, leading into the return of the primary melodic figure (Ab-F-Gb-Ab-Db), the inverted sixteenth-note head motive, back to the tonic of Db. In short, while both inversion of the sixteenth-note head motive and the descending fourth motive are presented through the top voice, the inner voice traces the descending fourth motive, creating a beautiful counterpoint with its top voices. Especially remarkable is the use of the inversion of the double neighbor



motive and the mirroring of the descending fourth motive and its inverted form, both generated from Ab.

The second section begins with the orchestra playing the main melody while the piano accompanies the orchestra with triplet chordal passages. This section features the same phrase structure and the motivic presentation as the first section but in the tonic key of Db major. The variation concludes with an extended coda. The coda places a lyrical and slowly descending countermelody in the orchestra, which is joined by the piano playing the main melodic figure. Harmonically this last section includes a long prolongation of the treble Db, which descends to a lower register, calming the music from its peak in the second section over a long pedal point on the tonic. However, a sudden shift of key to A minor is indicated, now the “warm” Db is immediately transformed to a C# enharmonically in m. 680. The C# descends by a half step to C-natural in the A minor chord (m.682) to prepare the A minor of the following variation.

**Example 6.24** Rachmaninoff, *Rhapsody*, Var. 18, mm. 675-685

The musical score for Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody*, Variation 18, measures 675-685, is presented in two systems. The first system, labeled 'I', shows the piano part with a descending melodic line in the right hand, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking, and ending with a *pp* (pianissimo) marking. The second system, labeled 'II', shows the orchestra part with a descending melodic line in the right hand, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a piano (*p*) dynamic, and ending with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The piano part also includes a descending melodic line in the left hand, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a *dim.* marking, and ending with a *pp* marking. The orchestra part includes a descending melodic line in the left hand, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a piano (*p*) dynamic, and ending with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

The beauty of the eighteenth variation has made it the pinnacle of the *Rhapsody*. The inverted melodic contour along with Rachmaninoff's imagination develops into a luxuriant and full-bodied lyrical statement. As one of the most famous passages in the entire classical piano literature, this variation is charged with sophistication, sincerity, and refined musical taste, as well as a masterful compositional skill that ultimately provides and architectural builds up toward an emotionally exuberant peak.

When Rachmaninoff had completed his *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, Abram Chasins wrote, "...It seemed to me that there was not very much left to do with this theme, that the possibilities had been exhausted, but you have conclusively proven the contrary by this latest opus."<sup>52</sup> A typical Theme and Variations generally leave behind the motivic features of the theme and elaborate the underlying harmonic progression. Rachmaninoff follows the tradition by applying rather standard variation techniques such as simple harmonic and melodic changes in the beginning of the work. However, as the harmonic relationships and tonal relationship become more complicated and ambiguous as the piece progresses, Rachmaninoff moves further away from the original theme by twisting the underlying harmonic structure and developing its motives in various ways. As a result the surfaces of the original material get dissolved, and new surfaces get created organically. Rachmaninoff has masterfully combined the standard Theme and Variation form and the musical narrative, bringing the traditional form to a new height.

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<sup>52</sup> Bertensson and Leyda, *Rachmaninoff*, 309.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The focus of this study has been on the various approaches to this theme throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Of the five works studied (those of Paganini, Liszt, Brahms, Rachmaninoff, and Lutosławski), each composer reacts to Paganini's theme in his own personal way, demonstrating his individual style of writing and different approaches to the variation technique.

Liszt's *Grande Etude de Paganini No. 6* is a transcription that attempts to realize Paganini's violin virtuosity on the keyboard. His intentions were to create a breakthrough in technical keyboard resources, which would demonstrate a pianistic technique of his own. Although it follows the original work's entire tonal and formal scheme closely, Liszt made minor alterations, such as small harmonic and rhythmic changes, and also inserts fragments of the theme into the original variations.

Lutosławski's treatment of the Paganini theme is unique. He follows Liszt's transcription technique in preserving the essence of the original theme but at the same time explores possibilities of twentieth-century brilliance and creativity, thus bringing together an original nineteenth century work and twentieth-century harmonic idioms. The combination of a variety of chords, including tritones, major, minor and diminished intervals over the traditional I-V-I progressions, has made this work very distinctive in comparison with other works on this theme. Lutosławski's choice of performing medium (two pianos) also creates a more varied and layered texture, thereby enhancing the virtuosity and effectiveness of the original variations.

Brahms composed 2 books of motivically independent variations on Paganini's theme, with 14 variations for each book. The two sets are completely independent from each other, each forming an individual process of development and experimentation. Compared to Liszt's variations on the same theme, Brahms's work focuses on the original harmonic structure and is more adventurous in its use of pianistic devices, such as wide leaps, octaves, double chords in thirds and sixths, combinations of polyrhythms, trills for the weaker fingers, and so forth. Brahms also exploits diverse transformations of melodies, rhythms and textures, focusing on a specific technique in each and every variation. Even though many different moods are invoked throughout the piece, the two sets of variations have an overall sense of seriousness and drama, displaying Brahms's serious attitude towards this unpretentious theme. In the structural aspect, his variations remained strict, hardly straying from the explicit harmonic structure of the theme, except for the greatly expanded 14<sup>th</sup> variation in the first set.

Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody* is the most symphonic. The Paganini Theme is expressed through a much wider range of mood, from the most diabolical to the most serene. His choice of instrumentation (piano and orchestra) creates a more varied spectrum of colors and textures. The title *Rhapsody* also suggests a freer, improvisatory character in his approach, which includes an added theme *Dies Irae* and a modified inversion of the original theme (Var. 18). Rachmaninoff organizes the work into three sections, corresponding to the form of a sonata or concerto, and organically produces the variations in relation to the theme and its different motives, designs the large-scale tonal and formal organization, and ultimately unifies the theme and variations as a whole in his own musical discourse and narrative. He begins with traditional Theme and

Variations treatment then gradually places great emphasis on the melodic and motivic element of the theme, and has nearly exhausted every option. The *Rhapsody* is a hybrid of a standard Theme and Variations and a musical narrative. By turns playful, melancholy, military, and dramatic, the twenty-four variations are brilliant not only individually, but as part of a unified artistic whole.

A deep curiosity about how many ways a simple theme can be treated and stretched has stimulated and motivated the present study. In particular, this study has exposed how different composers articulate a specific musical motive or form to express their inspirations of the theme. It is intriguing to observe the composers employing a wide range of compositional methods from almost identical to the furthest possible. We may conclude with a quote, as Wadham Sutton writes,

That all this feverish activity should have been initiated by what was, after all, no more than a random idea in his Op. 1 would doubtless have come as a surprise to Paganini. For on that day in his extreme youth when he fortuitously devised this innocent theme, he could scarcely have foreseen the fascinating adventures which it was destined to undergo.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Wadham Sutton, "A Theme of Paganini," *Musical Opinion* (March 1971): 287

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